

BANDWAGON

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The two Cole Bros. Circus wagons on the cover were lost in a winter quarters fire in Rochester, Indiana on February 20, 1940.

The steam calliope wagon had been built a year before. The Great Britain tableau was built for the U.S. Motorized Circus in 1917 and been on Robbins Bros. The two color photographs were taken in 1939 using Dufaycolor film.

THE BACK COVER

The cover of the 1912 Al F. Wheeler Circus courier is pictured on the back cover. It was printed by the Erie Lithographing Co.

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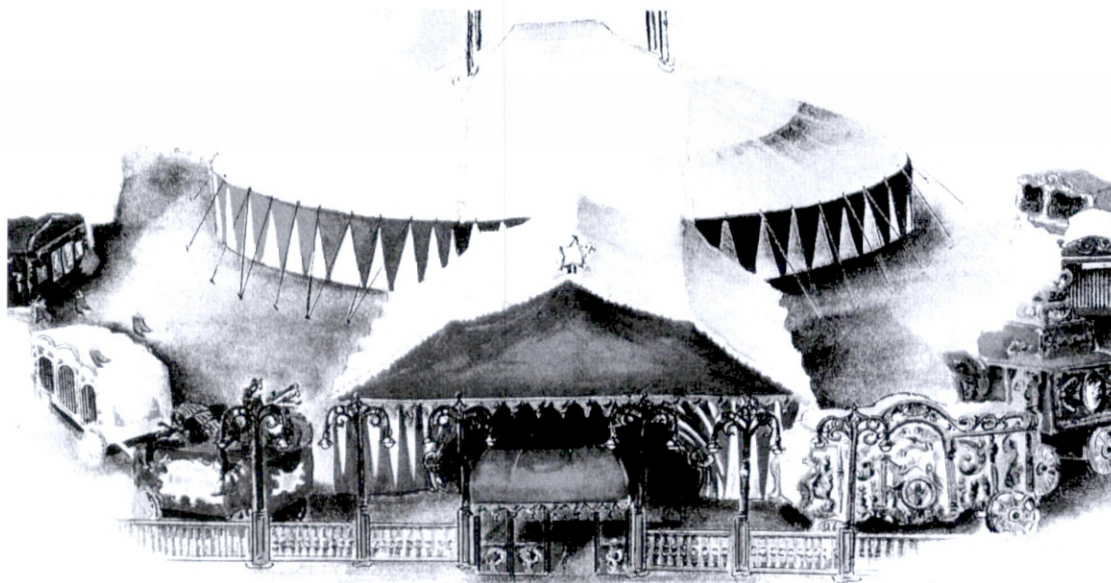
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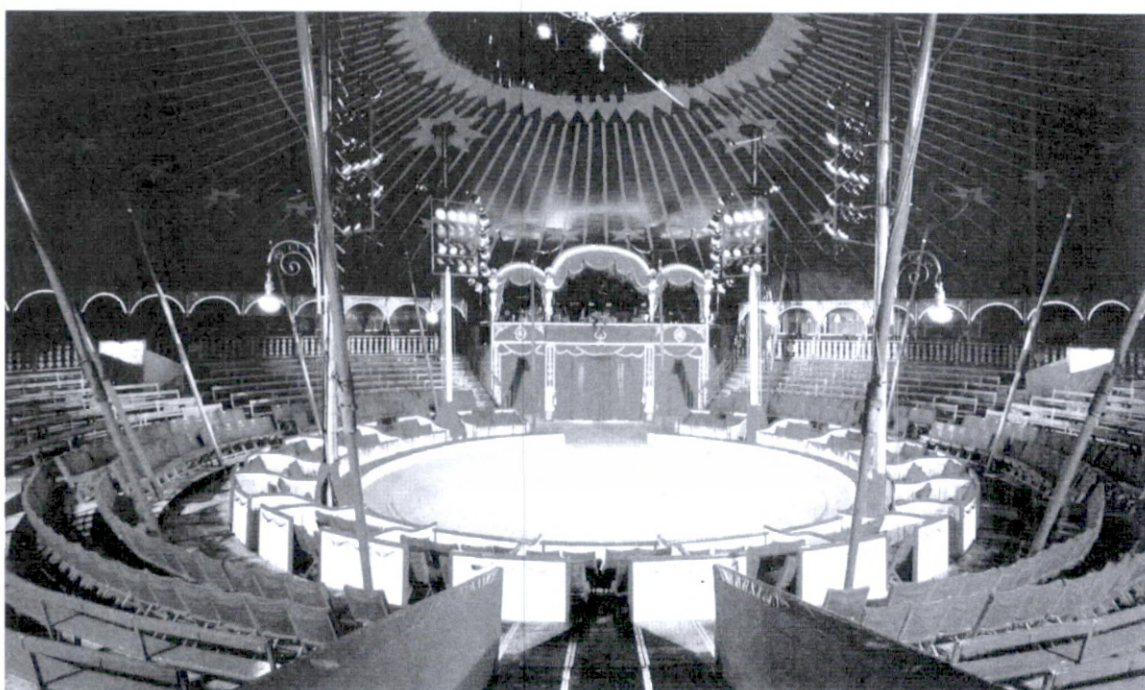
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Barnum's Kaleidoscope



THE CIRCUS STAKE DRIVER:

THE BEST, SIMPLEST, AND MOST ECONOMICAL MACHINE EVER INVENTED

PART ONE

By Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

An abridged and edited version of this paper was read at the 1998 Circus Historical Society convention.

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The purpose of this monograph is to document the origins of the stake driver and to trace its development over the first fifty years of use by railroad tent circuses. This paper represents an initial effort to document this seldom acknowledged but significant aspect of circus history.

Introduction

Ask any knowledgeable circus historian and they will readily name at least two labor saving devices invented for circus use. They will tell you the canvas spool wagon was first developed in 1910/1911 by William H. "Cap" Curtis. The derivative spool truck, devised by Wayne Sanguin and Kelly Miller in the 1940s, is well known and still used by contemporary circuses. They will also know the first mechanical seat wagon was constructed for 1921 by Cap Curtis. Art Concello and subsequent showmen later created semi-trailer based designs beginning in 1948. The seat truck remains an important part of the modern motorized circus' arsenal of expense and time-saving appliances.

But what about an even earlier, more fundamental and still useful mechanical contrivance, the stake driver? The driver, now utilized in forms which incorporate a variety of modern technologies, is still part of traveling tent shows. In its heyday, the number of shows owning stake drivers far outstripped the combined total of all spool and seat wagon owners. But, who knows when and by whom it was invented? Why has the seemingly mundane driver been ignored? Even George L. Chindahl, a patent attorney who delved into many aspects of little-known circus technology, failed to authoritatively document its origin and development. Chindahl initiated some investigations into the history of the stake



Fig. 1. Legendary boss canvasman James "The Whale" Whalen laying out the Ringling show for an August 11, 1917 date in Fort Collins, Colorado. Iron pins with different colored fabric ribbons were used for the purpose. Circus World Museum.

driver, as reflected in his surviving correspondence and notes on the subject, but never tackled the entire story.

Prelude to the Stake Driver; Laying Out and Manual Stake Driving

A ritual of Circus Day, as essential as the big show itself, was the arrival, unloading and erection of the traveling city which was the railroad circus.

For over eight decades, the arrival of the circus train, followed by a mul-

Fig. 2. Stake driving was an anticipated part of the Circus Day ritual. Here a great crowd watches canvasmen driving stakes on Ringling-Barnum in the 1920s. Circus World Museum.



titude of assigned duties carried out by dozens of forgotten individuals, comprised a show before the exhibition in the ring. Among the tasks executed with military-like precision was the laying out and driving of the hundreds of stakes which secured the tents to the show grounds. The fastening of the tent to the earth on which it was erected was fundamental. Without it, the traveling circus had no home as its tents were not self supporting. From the first circus use of tents in 1825 until the first mechanical stake driver of 1904, the driving of the hundreds of stakes on circus grounds was accomplished by legions of hard working men and boys.

Exactly what was the work accomplished by the human stake drivers and the men who guided them?

Writer Cleveland Moffett (1863-1926) penned several pieces about the railroad circus of the turn of the century for the popular press. He documented the laying out of the tents and stake driving in the following passage. He described the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth of 1894, but he could just as well have been describing the work of John "Happy Jack" Snellen's crew on Ringling or those of other legendary boss canvasmen on a dozen different shows. After reading his account, one can readily understand the excitement accompanying the arrival of the circus and how its practiced and precise routines transfixed the local citizens with its speed of execution and single-mindedness of purpose.

"The mist and shadows of the night begin to break. It is half past three [A. M.]; there is a cry from the crowd, 'Here they come!' and presently a lumbering omnibus, drawn by two horses, drives into the field, crowded with brown-faced, strong-armed men. It stops, and twenty men springing to the ground gather about a leader whose face shows quick decision, and who proceeds to strip off his coat for work. It is Jack Hunt, the boss canvas-man, with the advance guard of his workmen. A few years ago Jack was himself a member of the common gang, working for four dollars and a half a week; but ability tells in putting up tents as in other things, and now he holds one of

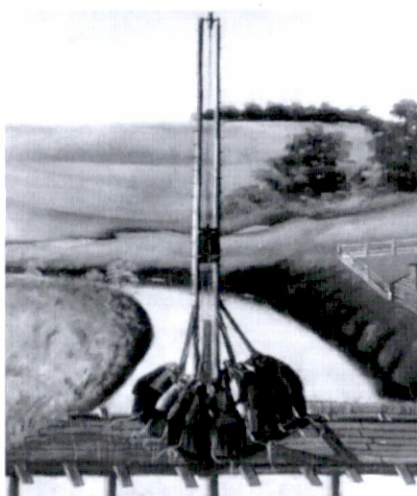


Fig. 3. Stake driving was similar to well drilling and other construction activity. This 1896 Olaf Kraus painting documents a human powered pile driving rig. Bishop Hill State Historic Site, courtesy Steve Gossard.

the most important positions in this most perfectly organized of all armies, the modern circus.

"Locating the tents.

"A quick glance over the ten acres, and Jack Hunt has decided on the location of the main entrance, which, in a general way, is the point of departure for everything else. Having settled where the 'big top' will stand, the location of the other eleven tents is determined with

Fig. 4. George H. Heiser's portrait from the 1899 Ringling Bros. route book suggests a friendly personality, yet one accustomed to the rigors of road show life. Pfening Archives.



mathematical precision, as the heart determines the rest of the body.

"Out of the way, you boys,' says Hunt, tape measure in hand, as he starts forward to mark the long diameter of the 'big top.' Two men trot beside him, their arms filled with iron rods two feet long and pointed at one end. Two others help him with the measurements, holding one end of the tape while he runs out the necessary distances. He locates first the five centre (sic) poles of the big tent, an iron bar being driven at each point. Then, in the same way, he marks the circumference of the tent, indicating the points where the two hundred and eight side poles will stand. A little red or blue flag flutters at the top of each iron rod, making the plan of the tent stand out on the sod like a geometrical pattern.

"The 'big top,' four hundred and forty feet by one hundred and eighty, being thus laid out, Hunt and his men hurry to the site of the menagerie tent, which is connected with the main tent by a neck of canvas. This they mark out in the same way, the iron rods here being topped with white flags. All is done with incredible rapidity, the plan of the two great tents being finished within eight minutes of the start. In other parts of the field are as quickly laid out the dressing-room tent, two horse-tents, the wardrobe tents, the side-show tent, the freaks' dressing-room, and half a dozen smaller tents for the blacksmith shop, the repair shop, etc. Thus, by four o'clock, Jack Hunt, who never went to college, has disposed of enough angles, circles, diameters, and radii, to drive a professor of mathematics frantic; and he has made no mistakes, there being no provision in the programme of a great circus for mistakes. It is only half an hour since the omnibus drove into the field, but a thousand iron rods have been driven to mark where the tent stakes are to go, and a thousand little flags of various colors, according to the tent, are fluttering over the ground in curious lines and curves. All is now in readiness for the larger gangs of workmen, who have meantime made their way from the train on foot.

"As the cookhouse wagons arrive and preparations made for the morn-

ing's hearty breakfast, Jack Hunt is overseeing the unloading of the stake-wagons, the pole wagons, the canvas wagons and the tool-wagons, which have come across the field. . . . Now he puts his whistle to his lips and sounds three shrill calls which summon all the 'big top' gang to the spot. Eighty-five men respond to the call, fine hearty fellows, with bodies all muscle, and with special skill for the work before them. They are divided into two groups; about thirty to wield the sledges, and the rest to lay the stakes where they are to be driven, and the side and quarter poles where they are to be raised.

"Driving over a thousand stakes in less than an hour."

"First comes the driving of the stakes, no mean slight task, since each stake is four or five feet in length, two or three inches thick, and has to be driven three-fourths of its length into hard ground. Between two hundred and three hundred blows of the sledge are required to get a stake home. The sledges have handles three feet long and heads that weigh seventeen pounds. They must be swung high in the air, and be brought down with the full force of a pair of strong arms. There are over a thousand of these stakes to be driven, which means two hundred and fifty thousand blows of the sledges. But for their special skill, this work alone would take the men half a day. They will do it easily in forty-five minutes. They begin with the 'big top' tent, which is marked out four hundred and forty feet in length and one hundred and eighty feet wide. There are three hundred and fifty stakes to be driven here, and four gangs of men, of seven or eight men each, are charged to drive them. The leader of each gang places the stake where the iron rod stood, taps it two or three blows to make it stand alone, and then with a nod signals the gang to begin striking. The seven men stand

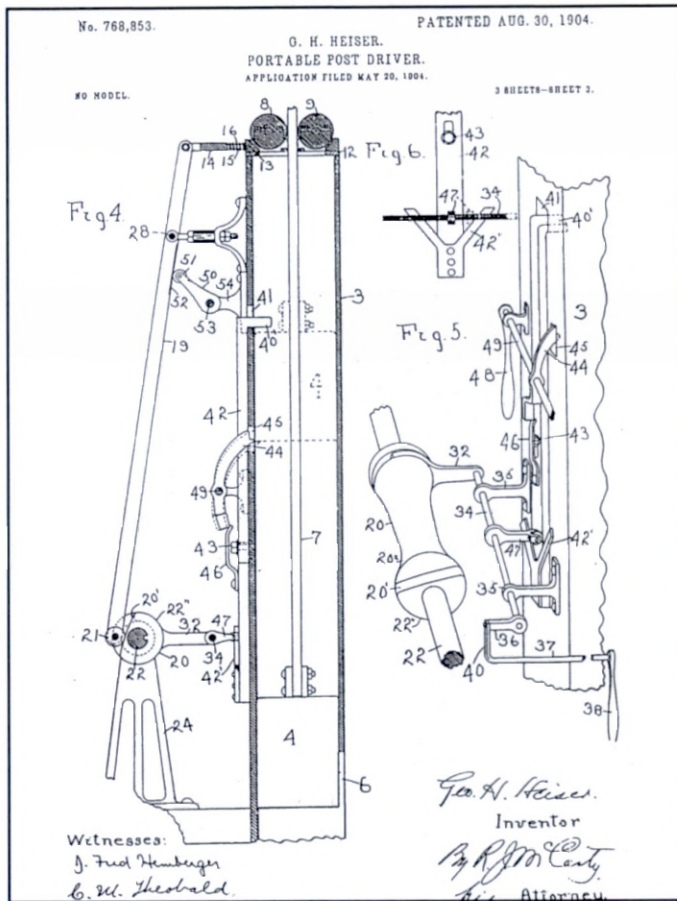


Fig. 5. Part of the complexity of the Heiser driver design is evident in this patent drawing. Others soon found a way to simplify the mechanism.

in a circle around the stake, their sledges ready. Each man swings his sledge through a full circle, the heavy iron hammers coming down on the iron head of the stake in regular and rapid succession. Each man strikes about one blow a second, so that the stake receives seven blows a second. So skillful are the men that they never miss a blow, never interfere with each other, and never vary from the musical rhythm set by the leader. The blows have a well-marked accent or beat on the third or fourth stroke, so that they seem to be striking in three-time or four-time, and this all over the field; for at the same time other gangs are driving the stakes for the other tents. The effect for the listener is very interesting."¹

According to Ringling practice, sledge gangs of four, six or eight men were delegated to the task of driving individual stakes. Usually these hammer artists posed proudly with

their sledges when they were photographed for the route book. The rhythmic pounding on the stake, in turn, by each member of the gang as they stood in a circle around the stake, is a well-known circus activity. The sound of the sequential hammer hits was likened to a stick being dragged along a picket fence. Its utter simplicity and efficiency literally mesmerizes those who watch it. As the 1894 and 1897 Ringling Bros. Circus route books described the action (pages 15 and 11, respectively), "We are attracted by the sight of the different sledge gangs. Six men driving one stake at one time make quite a hit with us, also with the stake--in fact, several hits with the latter. Rap, biff, bang, tick, chuck, the sledges play their merry tattoo in rapid succession, and it hardly seems as though one sledge could be withdrawn before another descends upon the head of the defenseless stake." And, "The rat-a-tat-tat of the six-teen-pound hammers, swung by sinewy, muscular arms, is heard on every side and it seems that a thousand men are driving stakes, each gang vieing (sic) with the other to see who can get through in the least space of time." One can see where the demonstration of their physical prowess made the task something of a male-bonding experience, especially if there was an audience to impress at hand.

While tent specifications are seldom available, there are accurate statistics available from a lawsuit instituted against the Ringling Bros.' World's Greatest Shows resulting from a blowdown at Maryville, Missouri on September 18, 1905. Their big top measured 440 feet long by 190 feet wide. The side poles had a height of fourteen feet, suggesting a stake line about fourteen feet away from the canvas to provide the opti-

mum 45 degree angle of repose for the side pole ropes. Manipulation of the data in the legal summary of the case indicates that the Ringling big top was held aloft by at least 442 stakes, plus others which were used for center pole supports and so on. Likely the number was over 500 stakes total for the big top, with that number again for all the remaining tents. The stakes measured 4-1/2 to 5-1/2 feet long. The data is comparable to that of the 1894 Barnum & Bailey tent operation witnessed by Cleveland Moffett, the two being the largest big tops then in use.

An understanding of tent, side pole, and stake arrangements will prove valuable to understanding the design of various stake drivers. The assembled shape of a big top was usually a racetrack oval, covering multiple rings, and in some cases, stages, a hippodrome track and the seating. Circus tents, or "tops" as they were usually termed in the business, were rectangles and pie-shaped pieces laced together. The canvas sections were typically created from canvas goods (8 or 10 ounce drill were common) which measured thirty inches in width. Sewn to the canvas was a web of manila ropes which formed the support system of the canvas and which provided the means to affix the tent to the ground. Allowing for an overlap at seams yielded a tent which had side poles every nine and three-quarters feet, just three inches shy of ten feet. Two ropes, or guys, emanated away from the tent at each side pole, with another single rope attached to the tent edge between each pair. Outward from each side pole location, at a distance about equal to the height of the side poles, a pair of stakes were driven. To each stake was fastened one of the two guy ropes that were part of the tent rope system. A third stake was driven in a corresponding position outward from the single intermediate guy rope.

The layout yielded three stakes for every nine and three quarters feet of the tent's outer perimeter. On the 1905 Ringling

show, they added another, fourth, stake to augment those holding the two main guys. The stakes were so driven that they formed two ovals of stakes around the tent. The "main" guy was affixed to the stake placed closest to the tent; the "safety" (also auxiliary or pulling) guy was fastened to the stake farther from the tent. Another single stake was driven between each pair of guy stakes. To it was fastened the "storm" (also extra or wind) guy that was affixed to the tent midway between the side pole positions.

The names applied to the various guys varied from show to show and over time. While various stakes were used to position and hold the center poles and perform other duties, it was the driving of the side pole stakes which usually caught the attention of the on-looking crowds.

While reading this paper, the read-

Fig. 6. Bowdle Bros. advertised but once in a trade journal, placing this ad in the December 3, 1904 issue of the *Billboard*. It embodied the basic form of stake driver used by most circuses thereafter.

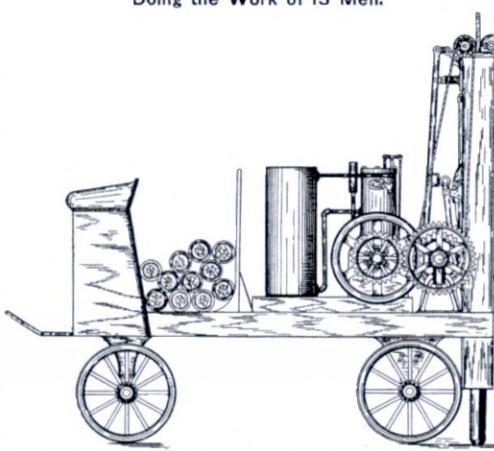
Notice CIRCUS PROPRIETORS **Notice**

JUST WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR!

The Mechanical Stake Driver.

INVENTED AND PATENTED BY GEORGE H. HEISER.

The Best, Simplest and Most Economical Machine Ever Invented.
Two Horses, a Driver and One Man Complete the Outfit
Doing the Work of 15 Men.



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SIMPLE, SAFE, ECONOMICAL AND ALWAYS READY.

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er should remember that any form of mechanical stake driving had to be able to drive stakes in the positions dictated by the tent design.

The Sledge Gangs

We would be remiss if mention were not made of the canvasmen who drove the stakes. Little has been written of the roustabouts who performed the many labors necessary to carry on the work of the traveling circus. Like so many worker ants, they anonymously went about their assigned tasks, frequently working for three square meals a day, along with a traveling home for the night. A select few, like the late Bill Hill, went on to success and renown in the business. A handfull earned the title of Superintendent of Canvas.

It should not be surprising that many of the big top and sledge crews, especially from shows quartered in northern metropolitan areas and the south, were black. With the exception of the Barnum & Bailey circus, where James A. Bailey had a policy of black exclusion until 1903, all of the larger circuses eventually employed large numbers of blacks to perform the

hardest and dirtiest tasks on the show, that of driving the stakes and raising the tents. A clipping in the 1903 Barnum & Bailey Press Book, possibly from the November 8, 1903 Washington *Times*, noted that Bailey imported Negroes from Virginia to work on the show for the first time.

On the John Robinson Ten Big Shows there was a "Colored Brigade" of canvasmen. The Sells Bros. show, according to "Cap" Curtis, was known as "quite a Negro show" because of its extensive use of black laborers, a fact attested to by photographs of the largely black canvas crews. When Bailey and the Sells brothers pooled their interests and formed Forepaugh-Sells in 1896, Bailey sent a wire to Lew and Ephraim Sells telling them that no blacks should be hired on canvas. Curtis was on hand when the telegram was received and later recalled the incident for historian George L. Chindahl. Other major circuses, including Ringling Bros., Walter L. Main and Gollmar Bros.

all had black laborers in the big top crews. One can conclude that the circus mirrored the culture and hiring practices of the era. The low status jobs held by Blacks reflected the times' social norms.²

It is little wonder that the work-hardened men of the sledge gangs were those most often called upon to defend the people and property of the circus when local hooligans threatened their safety and well being. Hours of hard work gave them inordinate muscular development which provided a formidable defense against the amateur toughs of the local community. George W. "Popcorn" Hall (1837-1918) guessed that he had already been in "fifty good organized riots" with town rowdies by 1884. He told a reporter "Well, you can bet that we were always ready . . . we generally came out at the top of the heap. You see, we always had the advantage of being organized, and had a system in our fighting, while the other fellows would tumble up to the scrimmage, shooting right and left, without paying any attention to each other, and in that way would soon get separated, and then we had them right where we wanted them. The iron-capped tent stakes got their work in, and the victory was ours. I tell you, one of those heavy stakes in the hands of an old-time canvasman is not to be sneezed at."³

As the 1894 Ringling route book (page 15) noted in verbose prose, "Just cut a rope, that held a pole, And in the side-wall cut a hole--they'll never do that trick again--hard were the stakes of the canvasmen." Unfortunately, learned proficiency with a tent stake could prove deadly. One Barnum & Bailey canvasman slew another with a stake at Dubuque, Iowa on August 29, 1904.⁴

The Mechanical Stake Driver

Technological progress never occurs in a vacuum; that is to say, advances in the technical arts always build upon existing knowledge. Unfortunately in the case of the stake driver, none of the principals recorded what influenced them to create their version of the mechanism. Any number of related arts might have had an impact. Similar

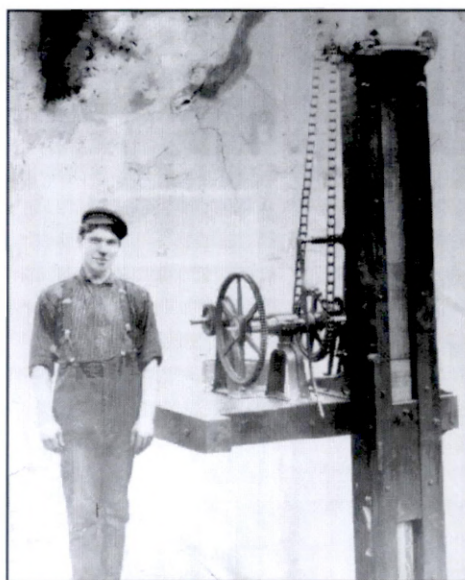


Fig. 7. This is thought to be the first circus stake driver ever built. It was constructed in early 1904 in accordance with the Heiser patent by the Bowdle Bros. and served on the Ringling Bros. Circus. Circus World Museum.

mechanisms included drop forge hammers, pile drivers, fence post drivers and well drilling apparatus. Clutch mechanisms of the type used in any number of devices, including lineshaft drives, drop hammers and other machinery, might have inspired the inventor. We also suspect that in the case of the first driver that the patentee created a rather complicated mechanism. The invention of something never previously devised qualified it for a patent. Since later drivers were presumably not patented, we surmise that their components were part of known technology, making patenting them impossible.⁵

Our research has revealed that no single individual can be recognized as the inventor of the stake driver. The machine has one of those complex histories involving several individuals, both well known and essentially forgotten, each of whom added his little bit to the final flowering of the fine art of stake driving. Beyond being the accumulated result of the efforts of numerous tinkerers, the story of the stake driver suffers from the absence of primary records for its formative years. No one thought their contribution adequately impor-

tant to document it in a memoir and the surviving written record is barely adequate to reconstruct the events of how it evolved. Patent records offer some confirmation but it is largely the photographic record that enables us to re-create the rather intriguing history of the stake driver.

During the early development of the drivers, trade journals commented on their introduction. Their perfection ultimately caused them to be regarded as just another piece of standard circus hardware. If they were mentioned later it was not because the technology was new or novel; it was because the acquisition of a driver was a mark of achievement for a circus. Nothing smaller than a ten-car rail show ever had one, and usually it took 20-cars or more to justify the capital expenditure.

Why invent a mechanical stake driver? For anyone who has never pounded in a stake with a sixteen pound sledge hammer on a hot summer day or in a heavy downpour, the need might not be readily apparent. Anyone who has driven stakes into soil and gravel, through asphalt or concrete, has probably never experienced a more fatiguing task than to anchor something in the earth with a simple wood stake. There was no more taxing task than to drive the hundreds of stakes required for the tents of the railroad circus. It was an important job, one which needed to be accomplished before the great canvas tops could be lifted skyward.

Stuart Thayer's research has shown that the tent became the traveling house of the circus in 1825, but there was no effort to mechanize the driving of stakes until eight decades later. Steam powered forge hammers, devices which performed a task very much like stake driving, were in industrial use by the late 1840s. Steam boilers were used on portable earth moving shovels as early as 1836 and in steam fire engines by 1840-1841. Steam-powered well-drillers and pile-drivers were surely conceived in the same time frame. In 1857 a vertical boiler was placed on a four-wheel wagon and used to supply steam for the first calliope to travel with a circus. By 1879 there were

electrical generators with steam engines on circus show grounds.

The situation begs the question why there was no effort or interest to develop a portable, steam-driven stake driver for the circus. The obvious conclusion is that there wasn't a great need for one. Until the circus grew into a multiple-ringed attraction requiring a thousand or more stakes to be driven, the task was well matched to the available labor. With the abundance of physically-fit boys coming off the farms to see the world by traveling with shows, there was always a ready supply of economical muscle to perform the task of stake driving. Importantly, the roustabouts could be readily assigned to perform any number of useful tasks on the show grounds in an era when job descriptions were not limited by labor agreements. Further, the weight of a steam-driven driver would have precluded it from being quickly moved and precisely positioned at hundreds of locations around the ever-changing and uneven conditions of the circus show grounds. Internal combustion engines were applied, on a trial basis, to power circus light plants in 1903 and 1909, but they were not implemented on a permanent basis until 1913. Their horsepower to weight ratio was much higher than that of a steam plant and engine and it was this form of prime mover which facilitated the first successful mechanical stake driver soon after the turn of the century.

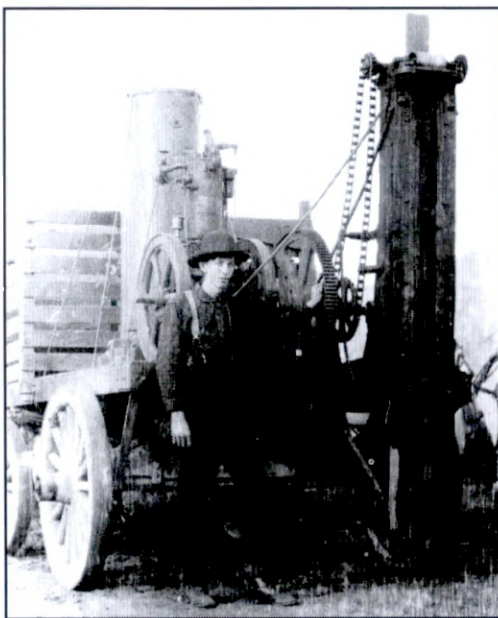
Beyond the invention and perfection of the gas engine, there were other factors which impacted the development of stake driving apparatus. Most traveling shows were capital poor and lacked the money and expertise to invest in the development of new devices. Indeed, material costs were more important than labor costs at this time, with material salvage frequently being undertaken because of the relative value of the resources. America was not yet a throw-away society.

The number of inspired engineers in circus history, such as the legendary "Cap" Curtis, is few and far between. Most of them confined their job to relatively routine transportation work, wagon and rail car

repair or rebuilding. There was also the tendency to continue traditional practices, and a sentimental commitment to the horse culture. The traveling circus did not embrace internal combustion-powered vehicle technology until the 1920s, nearly twenty years after it became reality and a decade after powerful trucks could have replaced teams of baggage horses. Couple that with the observation that even the mightily-endowed Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows did not drop the widespread use of baggage horses until 1938 and one can begin to understand the circus mentality regarding technical advances.

Tradition was strongly entrenched. A spokesman for the Ringlings in 1918 stated "The smell of gasoline would rob the circus of all its romance. We have had already to camouflage . . . power driven stake drivers to preserve the real circus spirit." Circus writer and romanticist Earl Chapin May wrote in 1927 that the stake driver "has saved many an aching back. But it doesn't seem like a circus without sledges."⁶

Fig. 8. A youthful operator stands beside the first circus stake driver ever built. This photograph has been dated 1908 by others, but logic suggests that it was the 1904-built Ringling Bros. driver and that the year is 1905. Circus World Museum.



Looking back over show history, it could be argued that most technical advances were originated by someone outside the business, technicians whose work had more universal application than the circus. We speak here of canvas tents, railroad cars, electrical generators and the like. But before we accept that hypothesis, let us consider the three labor saving devices that we mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Each of them, the spool wagon, the seat wagon and the stake driver, represented a specialized circus application that had little use outside the traveling show business.

So who was inspired to design the first stake driver? Well, it came from a circus man unconnected with the big top crew. Cap Curtis, who later built drivers, told George Chindahl that the man who built the first one was a 24 hour man, but didn't know his name.⁷

George H. Heiser and the Stake Driver

The first man to conceive of a practical, mechanical circus stake driver actually placed in service was George H. Heiser. His invention employed the single least costly and most pervasive and universal force on earth to drive stakes, gravity. Unlike so many devices in which the work of the prime mover was utilized to directly accomplish the object of the task, the internal combustion device which powered the driver was used indirectly to overcome the force of gravity and not to drive the stake.

Heiser was born about 1863, possibly in Dayton or Piqua, Ohio. He was not a mechanic or engineer, but he was a circus man. The first record of him is his position in the Advance Department of the 1896 Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Circus, when he would have been about 33 years of age. Though there is not a shred of evidence to confirm the thought, we suspect that he was in the business previously, possibly as a laborer as his later appearance suggests a life of arduous physical work. He joined the Ringling show in 1897, serving then and the next four seasons primarily as a Forage Agent and Layer Out, but putting in part of

the first season as a Front Door Man. His regular work caused him to travel a day ahead of the circus, making certain that all supplies, hay, oats and other commodities for which contracts had been made would be delivered without fail on show day. He was also responsible for ascertaining the conditions of the contracted lot, to assure that the condition of the grounds was suitable for the circus, or engage an alternate grounds if it was not acceptable. His Forage Agent position was responsible enough for his portrait to be included in the season's route book. Also shown in a group photograph of the Front Doormen, Heiser was twice as big as his fellow staffers, his corpulent, commanding presence perhaps the result of too many good hotel meals on the road. His final year with Ringling, 1903, was as a Contracting Agent. His last documented circus job was the same position with the 1906 Carl Hagenbeck show. His obituary connects him with Sells-Floto at an unspecified date, likely as a 24 hour man. In late 1905 a report stated that he would manage the Otto Floto Shows the next year, but nothing became of it. His last known engagement in the outdoor show world was as general manager of White City Park in Dayton, Ohio in 1909 and 1910. Toward the end of his life he operated a large collection agency in Dayton, Ohio.⁸

One of his friends on the Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows was Charles Andress, who provided a recommendation of him to Joseph T. McCaddon (1859-1938), then a Director of Barnum & Bailey, Ltd. in England. On July 26, 1902 Andress wrote McCaddon confirming his own 1903 transfer to the Barnum & Bailey show, continuing with the observation that "There are A few people here to whom I have entrusted the fact that I am to go with your show[.] I have also told Mr. Geo. Heiser, who is at present the 24 hour man here[.] [H]e is very desirous of joining you next season[.] He tells me that he has written you for contracting Ag[ent] and refered (sic) you to me[.] I wish to say that he is one of the best men in that line that I ever knew, A hard energetic worker, and has had to do very important work

this season as 24 hour man[.] [I]n fact [he] has had to change the lots very often, and has given entire satisfaction, and I can hartily (sic) recommend him."⁹ Beyond providing something of a character reference for Heiser, the Andress letter provides an important connection between Heiser and the stake driver, knowledge of soil conditions on the show lots. In addition to disclosing to Heiser his 1903 employment, it would not be surprising to learn that Andress also talked with his friend about an idea he had for a labor saving device.

Fig. 9. During his long career in show business, Charles Andress was a performer, owner and staffer. He also had the daring to conceive of the first pneumatic stake driver. Circus World Museum.

On January 9, 1904, from what must have been his off season residence in Dayton, Ohio, Heiser wrote to the Ringling Bros. as follows. "I have an idea for a machine that will drive Stakes. And drive them too [!] [I]f you are interested in anything of that Sort, I would be pleased to go to Baraboo and explain it to you, if you could send transportation."

The Ringlings answer is not preserved, but they did send him a letter on January 16 asking for more details. Heiser responded that "I can not explain my Idea for the machine very fully by letter[.] [I]t will only require a 4 horsepower gasoline engine to run it and you know what they cost and the cost of the machine itself will be less than \$150[.] making a total of about \$350.00 for the engine & machine[.] [O]f course you would have to place it on a wagon and you have plenty of old running gears up there that will answer the purpose. You can make the machine to strike 20 or 25 blows per minute and [it] will strike a blow of about 250 to 400 pounds according to [the] weight of the hammer. [T]he machine

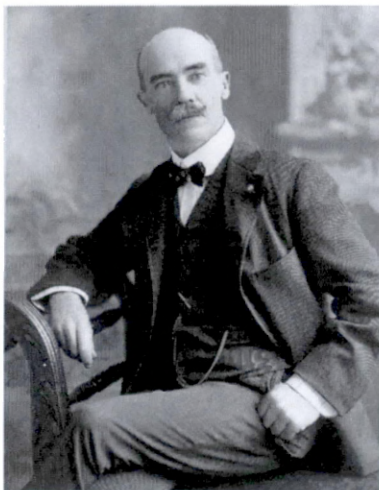
is very simple and there is very little to get out of repair. And as for the cost of using (sic) it, I intended that Ringling Bros. should use it without any cost to them[.] I would have gone to Baraboo had I the money to spare, hence my letter to you for transportation. Now if you will please advance me \$150.00 on next season[']s salary I will come up there and explain matters fully to you and I am sure that you will be convinced that it will work alright. If it don't (sic) work to your satisfaction, it

[will] cost you nothing, and if it proves alright Ringling Bros. gets it for nothing[.] [B]ut whether you are interested in it or not, will you please advance me \$150.00 on next season[']s salary."¹⁰

It's not known if Heiser received his \$150.00 advance, but he proceeded with the development of his concept and applied for a patent on May 20, 1904.

One was is-sued on August 30, 1904 as U. S. Patent 768,853. The Patent Office termed the machine a "Portable Post-Driver." There were seven claims granted.

Rather than delve into Heiser's rather complex mechanism, let us simply offer a layman's description of the basic elements. A heavy weight, the hammer, was fitted vertically in a rectangular casing, wherein it could be raised by lifting a bar extending upward from its top surface. The bar was raised by being squeezed between two constantly rotating contact rollers positioned at the top of the casing. The rollers were brought into contact with the bar by means of a linkage system activated by the operator, who stood in front of the hammer casing. In the Heiser design, the roller closest to the operator was fixed. Upon reaching the height prescribed by a fixed stop, the rollers were disengaged from the hammer lift bar and the weight held in an elevated position by a spring loaded catch mechanism. At this point, the operator placed a stake inside the



hammer casing, readying it to be struck by the hammer. A second lever, on the front of the casing, was then rotated by the operator, removing the catch from under the hammer and allowing the weight to fall and strike the stake.

Among the points to be remembered in this arrangement are the following. First, there were two levers which the operator coordinated. That means there were two systems that wore and were maintained. Second, the hammer was always raised to the same height, giving the same energy to all blows. Among possible points of distress were the contact surfaces between the linkage parts, the rollers, and the hammer lift arm; all had to be in order to work properly. There is no doubt that the mechanism was ingenious, but it was also pretty complex for the circus. From an operational perspective, the 3-step raise, latch and release operation might have been something of a discontinuous operation which relied upon the skill of the operator to keep in quick sequence. Further, there was no adjustability to make lower energy blows with the hammer. Every blow was of the same full magnitude, possibly resulting in over-driven stakes.

A photograph of what is thought to be the very first Heiser-designed driver shows the apparatus as depicted in the patent drawings. Mounted on a heavy wood bed plate, the metal and wood components would have been within the capability of any skilled machine shop. By late 1904, Heiser had associated himself with Bowdle Bros., machinists with a shop at 813-817 Downing Street, the southeast corner of Downing and River Streets in Piqua, Ohio. The principals of the firm were Ancil M. and William R. Bowdle. It had been founded by Charles W. Bowdle, probably their father, as the City Foundry and Machine Works in 1840 and continued in operation through 1917.¹¹

It was Bowdle Bros. which placed an advertisement in December 3, 1904 issue of the *Billboard* (page 57) offering to showmen, "Just what you have been looking for! The Mechanical Stake Driver. Invented and Patented by George H. Heiser.



Fig. 10. It is thought that this is the pneumatic hammer which Andress witnessed in a trial operation at Easton, Pennsylvania on April 20, 1904. Circus World Museum.

The best, Simplest and Most Economical Machine Ever Invented. Two Horses, a Driver and One Man Complete the Outfit. Doing the Work of 15 Men. Machine Strikes 65 Blows a Minute. Cost of operation very light. Can be started or stopped in a second. No expense when not in use. Simple, Safe, Economical and Always ready."

Accompanying the sales pitch was a cut showing the basic form of stake driver. The hammer was positioned at the rear of a four wheel, open platform, dead-axle wagon. The driver apparatus was powered by a vertical, one cylinder engine with external tank cooling, similar to that in the patent drawing. A mass of gearing, linkages and drive components is depicted in an undecipherable but realistic manner. An elevated driver's seat is at the front, with a pocket for stake storage between it and the driver engine. Although many improvements were subsequently made to the device, this engraving clearly defined the basic circus stake driver arrangement as it would exist for the next fifty years. As to the originator of the overall wagon design, his identity remains unknown. It may have been a collaboration between the driver designer and builder, or perhaps the wagon builder who mounted one on a four wheel

undercarriage for the first time.

We doubt Bowdle Bros. made anything other than the driver mechanism itself. Their scope of work is probably defined by the mechanism visible in the Heiser/Bowdle driver photograph. From surviving Moeller & Sons records, it is known that they built all of the driver wagons which served on the Ringling-owned shows of the 1910s. It would not be a stretch to hypothesize that they also built the first Ringling stake driver wagon and fitted the Heiser device on it. We would further suggest that the Moellers built two more drivers with Heiser, or Heiser-derived, mechanisms in the next six years for the Ringlings.

Confirmation of the initial circus use of the Heiser stake driver is contained in a memo from the Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows in *The New York Clipper* of July 2, 1904. "The mechanical stake driver, a novel invention, is one of the interesting adjuncts of the big show this year. It is a sort of baby pile driver, and is perched upon a wagon which is also used for carrying the stakes. The apparatus is driven around the grounds, is operated by a four horse power gasoline motor, which, together with one man, drives all the stakes of the big shops, restaurants, cook tents, horse tents, dressing rooms, menagerie, and all the smaller tents, and usually completes half the circle of the big tent before the sledge gangs are ready to perform their share of the stake driving. The stake driver strikes sixty-five blows to the minute, and as only fifteen blows are necessary to sink a stake properly, the advantage in time and hard work saved by this machine can be readily realized. It is not intended that the stake driver will cut down the working department of the show in the least, as fully as many men as before will be required to handle the heavy canvas. It is simply a labor saving device that the Ringlings have secured so that the men may have easier work these hot Summer mornings. 'All work and no play makes jack a dull boy,' indeed. And with the advantage of the many labor saving inventions which have been introduced by the Ringlings lately, together with clean sleeping quarters, three

excellent meals, which are always served on time, as the Flying Squadron now makes a breakfast a seven o'clock possibility always, the canvas men's and other laborers' conditions around the big show is a great deal different than in past years. The men have plenty of time to themselves, and as we are always full handed, indications point to a general feeling of contentment in the working department." The long winded claims for laborer comfort may have been a thinly veiled slam at the Barnum & Bailey Show, which was experiencing constant problems with the heavy equipment acquired for the show by owner James A. Bailey (1847-1906).

Nowhere does Heiser personally receive credit for the stake driver. It is not known if he was a member of the 1904 Ringling staff or if he accompanied the show merely to attend to the stake driver. The *Billboard* for December 9, 1905 (page 16) contains a report that the driver had been used exclusively on Ringling for the past two seasons with great success. The truth of the matter may have been that the machine was still in an imperfect state and needed refinement before others would buy one. There is no evidence to suggest that any enterprise other than a Ringling-owned show ever owned a Heiser style stake driver.

Two photographs document the appearance of the very first circus stake driver. The contraption clearly followed the lines of the 1904 Bowdle advertisement engraving, incorporating a somewhat crudely made stake box of horizontal slatted construction. Clearly seen are the two operating levers of the Heiser design. An unusual aspect of the Heiser driver was that the hammer casing was asymmetrically placed, set off to the right rear of the wagon. The casing was actually incorporated into the wagon framing, forming the right rear connection of the wagon's right and rear sills. The arrangement may have actually weakened the overall strength of both the driver and the wagon. The hammer position was dictated by the relative positioning of the drive system components. Ladder chain was used to transmit power

from the engine to the lift rollers, a choice which may have proven to be a poor one. This particular form of chain also serves to identify drivers with a Heiser origin and heritage. It wears with use, causing both an extension of length which must be handled, along with a loss of strength. Like other baggage wagons, the stake driver was built with a rear dead axle, that is, without springs. The arrangement assured there would be a minimum of bounce induced by the rising and falling of the hammer. The wagon's mass secured it from moving, but the springless arrangement must have surely taken a toll on the kidneys of the wagon driver.

But not everything was perfect with the Heiser stake driver. A clue as to what transpired in the next decade is contained in a letter which Charles Ringling (1864-1926) sent to his cousin, Henry Moeller, Jr., on January 1, 1924: "I remember too our stake-driver troubles, and that it took about nine years to perfect a stake-driver."¹²

Based on Ringling's recollection, one suspects there were significant problems with the Heiser design, which after resolution yielded a machine which differed significantly from the original product. This may

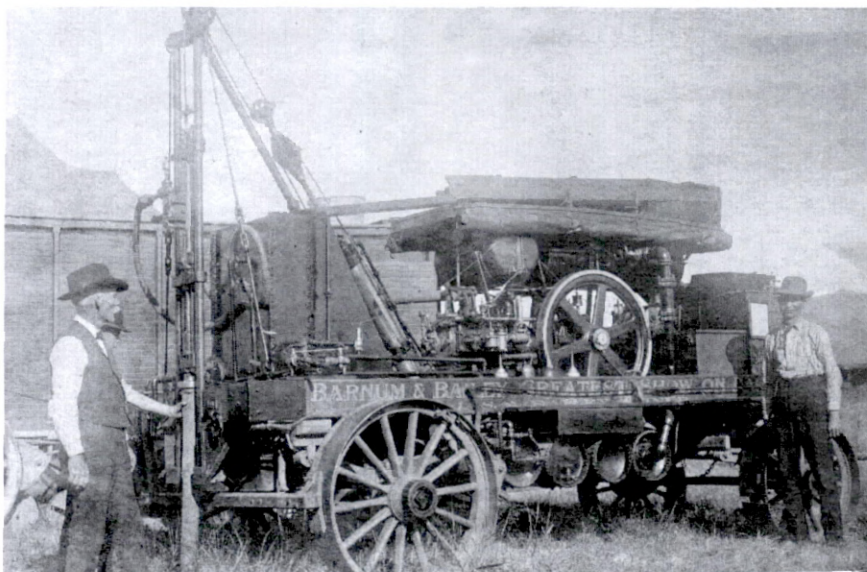
Fig. 11. The Andress driver was a wonder of mechanical invention, its complexity and cost probably precluding most other circuses from acquiring one. Circus World Museum.

explain why Heiser was never given clear credit for the invention of the stake driver. Exactly what changes were made remain a mystery. Ringling's letter infers a perfection date of about 1913, but we think he is off by several years. A lack of documentation makes it impossible to determine with certainty how late the Ringlings used a Heiser-style driver, or how many circuses might have ordered or tried one of his machines. We think they were used only on three Ringling-owned shows and their careers were less than a decade in their original form. Regardless, without Heiser's vision and determination the device may not have been devised until several years later.

Heiser died in Columbus, Ohio in June 1944 at age 85. Though he had not been connected with circuses for many years, his obituary did make the *Final Curtain* column of the July 1, 1944 *Billboard* (page 33). Not surprisingly, his invention of the first circus stake driver was not mentioned.

Charles Andress and the Pneumatic Stake Driver

While Heiser's machine was being perfected on the Ringling show, a friend of his was putting together his own idea for an entirely different stake driver for arch rival Barnum & Bailey. This one employed a relatively new type of portable power source, compressed air. It was surely the most technically sophisticated



piece of equipment owned by a circus to that time.

Charles Andress (1852-1933) was an unlikely man to address the task of stake driving. A child magician and later owner of his own traveling shows from as early as 1872 until as late as 1896, he later became a side show performer. By the turn of the century Andress graduated to the position of Legal Adjuster, or "fixer," for the Ringlings and stayed with them through 1902. Perhaps his knowledge of magic helped in that position. For the next five years he was with Barnum & Bailey in the same job. In addition to his routine duties, he published the show's route books for the last four of those years and devised a new stake driver for the season of 1905.¹³

Though Andress' driver first appears in complete form in 1905, there is evidence that he had been pursuing the idea for several years. In a July 19, 1905 letter to John Ringling, Andress stated that "I presume you know that I have been building [a stake driver] and you also know I have been talking about it for three years and tried to get the Ringling Bros. interested in it before I left them but they had but very little confidence in it."¹⁴ Heiser's friendship with Andress might have led the former to think about a solution for automatic stake driving, especially if Andress had talked about the concept beginning in 1902.

There is no known pre-1905 confirmation of Andress work except for a visit he made in 1904. The Barnum & Bailey route book for that year, under the date of April 20 when the Barnum show was playing Madison Square Garden, noted, "Charles Andress went to Easton, Pennsylvania, to attend a trial exhibition of a newly-invented 'stake driver.' He reports very favorably of it." Exactly which machine Andress witnessed is unknown. A photograph in Andress' personal photograph albums at Circus World Museum shows a large pneumatic hammer. The subject, view #728, is mounted in a portion of Andress' album devoted to the 1904 Barnum & Bailey circus. Accompanying photographs are also dated 1904. Whether it was the one eventually

incorporated into the Barnum & Bailey machine, or one he might have seen in Easton, is unknown. Perhaps a firm located there provided the crucial driver element for his 1905 machine.

Barnum & Bailey's 1905 under-canvas season began on April 24. Not until June 2, when the show was at Youngstown, Ohio is there mention of the new machine. As is typical with new machinery, there were some startup problems. The route book entry (page 67) reads "The new stake driver started operations but the [lift?] cable broke and some changes are to be made before it will be put into practical use."

Within two weeks appropriate progress had been made. For the June 13 Evansville, Indiana date the route book (pages 69 and 71) reported, "The first practical test of the automatic stake driver was made to-day and proved a success beyond all expectations. The inventors, Chas. Andress and Louis E. Cooke, are to be congratulated on the advent of this new and successful labor saving device. In spite of many obstacles the stake driver has won out and has come to stay."

Louis E. Cooke (1850-1923), gener-

Fig. 12. The business end of the Barnum & Bailey driver was the pneumatic hammer and its elevating apparatus. This photograph was probably taken in 1906 or 1907. Robert S. MacDougall collection.



al agent of the circus, apparently became interested in Andress' work during the winter of 1904-1905. One doubts his mechanical prowess; we suspect he may have provided Andress with financial support at a crucial time. Significantly, Cooke does not mention the stake driver in his history of the circus. The last entry about the driver in 1905 came on June 22 (page 73), at Saginaw, Michigan, when it was noted that James T. Andress, Charles' brother, joined the show to take charge of the driver. Another (page 9) identified members of the driver crew as Engineer D. Robertson and Stake Placer J. N. Kidd. Presumably there was also a teamster who drove a four or six horse team attached to the wagon.

Andress was quick to spread word of his driver's successful operation and to record his triumph over the nay-sayers. His July 10, 1905 note to John Ringling continued, "John[,] I can say now that it is a great success and every one who has seen it work since I have it compleated (sic) says it is a wonder[.] [A]s an evidence of the way it performs (sic) this morning it drove all the stakes on the two horse tents[,] menageria (sic) and big top before the men got breakfast[.] [I]n Saginaw a newspaper man timed it and it drove all the stakes on the small horse tent in 11 minutes and on the big horse tent in 13 minutes[,] menageria (sic) in 23 minutes[,] big top in 36 minutes[.] [A]ll told everything in one hour and 23 minutes[.] On this occasion the doors were ready to open at just 8.45[.] [I]n soft ground with iron stakes the machine merely pushes them in the ground in less than 2 secon[ds] and with wooden stakes it of course is necessary to use the combination of 'push and strike' and there is nothing to it. It is realy (sic) laughable to see the difference in all the 'wise ones' who were predicting that the machine was only a 'freak' and that I was only a 'daffy crank' and that there was nothing practical about it and they done everything possible to make it a failure and only for George Arlington [circus manager (1850?-1923)] and Mr. Bailey and Mr. Cooke I think I



Fig. 13. Ben Gollmar and four of his brothers framed the Gollmar Bros. Circus in 1891. Constantly in the shadow of their more successful cousins, the Ringlings, they have yet to be accorded their fair share of accolades. Circus World Museum.

should have been forced to abandon it[.] [I]n fact Mr. Cooke helped me out in the winter and took an interest in it only for these facts it would have been a failure but Mr. Arlington was firm and went to the front door for it and now it is all right and I think it is the only way." One can imagine that the only unhappy man on the lot was the driver who had to drag the huge device around the lot and position it hundreds of times.

Andress' memo serves not only to tell how the machine drove stakes but also documents the speed with which the task was accomplished. Less than six man hours were required at Saginaw. This can be compared to the figure of thirty men on the 1894 Barnum show who took 45 minutes to accomplish the same task, an expenditure of about 23 man hours. The machine reduced the labor man-hours by nearly seventy-five percent! Another description of the machine stated that a hood came down over the stake head before the hammer began its work. The hammering action of the impact head must have been so rapid that to the casual eye it appeared that the stake was merely being pushed into the ground.

The Andress stake driver remained with Barnum & Bailey for the next two seasons. One D.

Robinson served as the engineer in both years, aided by assistant Cromwell Vermilyea.¹⁵ The Andress stake driver was considered such a technical advance that it merited a full page of illustrated coverage in the show's 1906 courier, *The Circus Realm*. It stated that a gang of five or six men took nearly one minute to drive a stake but that the new machine drove four stakes in 29 seconds. With time allowed for machine positioning, it still averaged three stakes a minute. The labor savings was notable, but more importantly, when the show arrived late the fast machine played a role in reducing the time necessary to erect the tents. That enabled the show to open on time, an important event in the daily moving circus. One has to remember that these were the years of the super-heavy Barnum & Bailey show, one frequently late to open for a variety of reasons. A premium might have been placed on any opportunity to speed along show labor operations.¹⁶

The compressor was manufactured by the General Compressed Air Company of St. Louis, Missouri, of which J. S. Thurman was President and General Manager. The firm probably manufactured or supplied the gasoline engine, air compressor, reservoir tanks and four-wheeled wagon on which all of it was mounted. Both the compressor, and the water-cooled gas engine driving it, were horizontally disposed, with a single crankshaft shared between them. The compressor was rated to deliver 74.5 cubic feet of free air at a pressure of 75 pounds per square inch. The gasoline engine was a single cylinder machine, with an eight-inch bore and twelve-inch stroke, turning over at 225 revolutions per minute.¹⁷ Recovery time of the compressor may have been inadequate as a fourth air reservoir was eventually added to the chassis, increasing storage capacity by 33%. When not in service, a canvas cover was lowered to protect the compressor machinery. The Andress machine required two men to operate, whereas the Heiser device needed but one. We suspect that the Andress machine also cost several times that



Fig. 14. George Gollmar was a railroad machinist who later opened his own machine shop in Baraboo, Wisconsin. There he and his successor carried out work on circus stake drivers. Sandra Gollmar Edwards collection.

of a Heiser driver, but exact data is not available.

Others, presumably a pneumatic hammer manufacturer, supplied the actual operating head of the driver. No doubt Andress' work consisted of designing the mounting apparatus for the driver and developing a means of elevating it to a start position for each stake. An air cylinder, working a wire rope and pulley system, proved suited to the task. Like the original Heiser machine, the driver head was in a single fixed position and could only drive one stake before it had to be repositioned. It was positioned along the centerline of the wagon, at the rear of the wagon, making it a simple matter for the team pulling the wagon to disengage it from the stake it had just driven into position.

The weight of the machinery, 5,000 pounds for the wagon and compressor alone, combined with the soft soil on which it rolled, proved too much for the narrow wheels of the original St. Louis built wagon. Photographs taken of the driver in service reveal that extension rims were added to the wheels to reduce the possibility of it bogging down on soft soils. Later, conventional circus wagon wheels of a wider tread width were fitted to the wagon. A foot-operated brake initially applied braking effort

through one set of brake shoes, but eventually a second pair of brake shoes, located behind the rear wheels, were added to increase the retarding force.

The acquisition of Barnum & Bailey by the Ringlings presumably marked the end of Andress's association with the Greatest Show on Earth. Perhaps the arrival of the Ringlings' new legal representative, the legendary attorney John M. Kelley (1873-1963), marked the end of his career as a Legal Adjuster. He left show business at the end of 1907 and turned to farming in Kansas. Eight years later he toured C. W. Parker Carry-Us-All merry-go-rounds with two different circuses, reportedly developing part of the machinery which made them more readily portable. Andress's 1907 departure also marked the end of the first pneumatic stake driver. Whether owned by the show or Andress, the pneumatic driver was undoubtedly scrapped shortly after abandonment and quickly forgotten by nearly all.

That the Andress driver survived and was operated with a first rate circus continuously for three years suggests that it must have been successful. The fact that not another single show invested in the same technology infers that it was less than revolutionary. No doubt the complexity of the compressor system chilled the heart of any circus man who contemplated the responsibility for maintaining it. Perhaps it served as proof that the Barnum show could also come up with a modern means to drive stakes and that the outfit from Baraboo had nothing to equal it. It was a one-of-a-kind machine and had no enduring impact on the circus business or stake driver evolution. Three decades would pass before another attempt was made to construct a compressed air powered stake driver. We doubt that the men who made it knew of

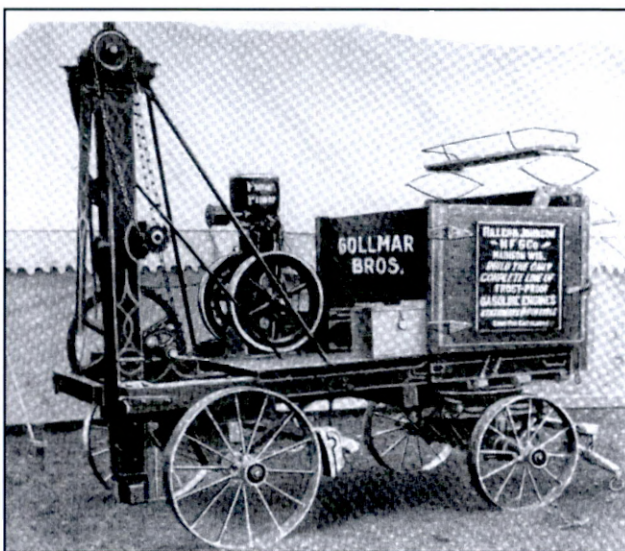


Fig. 15. The Gollmar Bros. stake driver of 1907 implemented a simple lever system which quickly made the complex Heiser design obsolete. This view is from a 1909 engine catalog. Verne W. Kindschi collection.

Andress' pioneering efforts.

But Andress was known in his own time as a stake driver inventor. A writer in the May 4, 1912 *New York Clipper* credited him with the device's invention, to the ignorance of Heiser and others. Another man who knew of Andress' work would later make his own mark in the business. Cap Curtis was quoted in an unpublished Earl Chapin May article as stating "when Charley Andress in-

vented the stake driver he did a wonderful thing for canvasmen." Curtis, himself, had worked for Andress about 1889-1890, when the latter had the Sells & Andress Circus & Menagerie on tour.¹⁸

The Gollmars, William A. Platt and the Automatic Stake Driver

Five of the sons born to Gottlieb and Mary Magdalene Juliar Gollmar mimicked their first cousins, the Ringlings, and started a circus in Baraboo, Wisconsin in 1891. They converted it from overland to rail operation in 1903 and built it up to a twenty-five car operation before selling it to James Patterson in 1916. Self-reliant and graced with both skill and determination, the Gollmars often built their own circus equipment. In addition to undertaking work at their own winter quarters on Second Avenue in Baraboo, some of the more specialized fabrication and machining work was done by one of their non-circus brothers, George J. Gollmar. From their joint efforts came a significantly improved mechanical stake driver.

With the Ringling implementation of the Heiser stake driver in 1904 it should come as no surprise that one of their mechanically-inclined Gollmar cousins would set about to make an improved device for their own railroad circus. Other than the two industry leaders, Barnum & Bailey and Ringling, no other circus had a stake driver until the Gollmars



assembled one for 1907. Benjamin F. Gollmar (1864-1947) is remembered by his nephew, Walter S. Gollmar, Jr., as the most inventive of the Gollmar brothers and the one who probably conceived the idea for their driver. In addition to many tasks carried out in the beginning, he served as the treasurer of the Gollmar show through its final season of 1916.

To his credit are two United States. Patents (1,220,412 and 1,220,413) granted on March 27, 1917 for an improvement in vapor stoves, a type of cooking apparatus that was sold to at least one circus and that was studied by the U. S. Army.

Ben Gollmar is thought to have made at least one very significant modification in the stake driver machinery. In lieu of the dual linkage, shifting roller and latching system of the Heiser apparatus, Gollmar provided a different solution, elegant in its simplicity. He placed one contact roller in a fixed position and kept it constantly rotating by means of a belt or chain drive. The other contact roller, also driven but by a different chain, was placed at one end of a pivoting lever, the other end of which was held by the driver operator. The pivot point was in a position very close to the contact roller, giving the operator a great mechanical advantage. Upon pulling the lever arm away from the driver, the hammer lift bar was forced into intimate contact with both driven contact rollers. This caused the hammer to be lifted upward until the operator returned the lever to the start position, removing the gripping action of the contact rollers and thereby permitting the hammer to fall and strike the head of the stake. The operator had a simpler lift and release operation, the latching step being eliminated. The Gollmar improvement also extended to the engine capacity; theirs was fitted with a 2-1/2 horsepower engine whereas Heiser's required one of four horsepower. A detail shared with the Heiser machine was the hammer placement. The Gollmar hammer was also framed into the right rear corner of the wagon.

In the Gollmar machine, the operator could control the height to which the hammer was raised, thus modulating

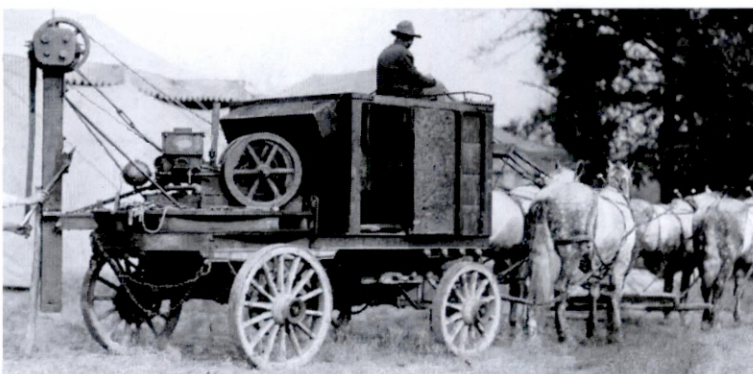
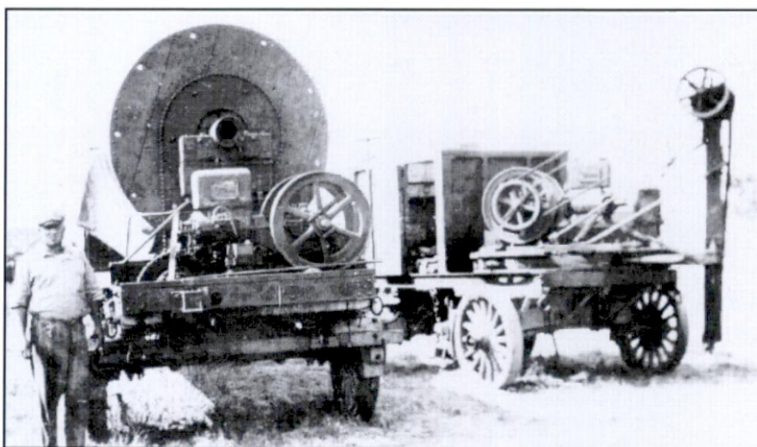


Fig. 17. The 1917 John Robinson stake driver typified the clean lines of the stake drivers built in Gollmar's Machine Shop. It's shown here in 1924, after seven years of hard work. Pfening Archives.

the amount of force applied to the stake. Wear in the rollers, lift bar and such were overcome by simply lifting more on the operating lever. No longer was there a twin linkage to deteriorate and a lift, latch and release type of operation to contend with. If the operator wanted to hold the hammer in the raised position, then he moved a short lever with his left hand that placed a position holding "dog" beneath the elevated weight. The simplicity of the Gollmar design, along with its ease of operation and limitations on maintenance, caused it to be utilized in nearly all mechanical stake drivers made thereafter. The few Heiser machines

Fig. 18. Another Gollmar-built stake driver was on the Hagenbeck-Wallace outfit, possibly as early as 1912. It shared the same make of engine with a Curtis spool wagon when this shot was taken in 1921. Pfening Archives.



built, perhaps only three, were all later superseded by Gollmar-style mechanisms.

To increase the operator's leverage while operating a Gollmar-design driver, most men struck a characteristic position. With one foot planted on the ground,

the other leg was lifted horizontal, with the foot placed against the frame of the driver. In this position they could pull with both hands on the lift lever, using the lifted leg as something of a fulcrum.

The Gollmar device is first seen in a photograph published in *The Show World* of September 21, 1907 (page 24). Accompanying the illustration was the following story. "New Machine for Circuses-The onward march of progress and the substitution of machine labor for the labor of man are the marvels of the nineteenth century. In this advancement the circus has been in no way backward, and possesses improvements today that were formerly unheard of. One of the greatest labor savers is the 'stake driver,' with the Gollmar Bros. Circus, a picture of which appears herewith. The machine is driven by gasoline engines (sic), saves the services of twenty-five men, and accomplishes the work in far less time. The difficulty that circus proprietors formerly encountered, when their workmen took leave of them for the more profitable harvest fields is, in a great measure overcome by this mechanical device,

which accomplishes the work with more expedition. The 'stake driver' may rightfully take its place among the labor saving devices of the century."

Given the dearth of any stake driver news between 1904 and 1907, it is likely that there was something special about the Gollmar apparatus. No particular claim was made for any

improvement embodied in the device, nor have we had the opportunity to ascertain if Gollmar was granted a patent for his machine. It is only because of the details to be seen in this visual representation that we believe that the Gollmars made this important advance in stake driver design.

The Gollmar machine received a fair bit of coverage in the trade press of its time, more than Heiser's. In addition to *The Show World* item, a photograph and testimonial letter concerning its Fuller & Johnson Manufacturing Co. gas engine appeared in the supplier's catalog number six, dated about 1909. This manufacturer, located in Madison, Wisconsin, utilized a water-cooled, open jacket design in their product, which was made between 1905 and 1910. The engine, rated at 2-1/2 horsepower, was ordered by the Gollmars from a salesman named Sexton and entered on the F & J books on December 28, 1906 as order number 3464. Assigned serial number 2209, it was shipped from the factory on February 2, 1907 to Baraboo. Vertically disposed, the arrangement would have fit into a more compact area on the driver bed than a horizontal engine, resulting in a shorter wagon. At 700 pounds, it also weighed about a third less than a similar power horizontal engine, which totaled 1100 pounds. In at least one year the wagon carried an informational panel about F & J on its stake box. F & J engines were sold mostly in Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota, states commonly played by the Gollmar show. Whether there was some type of commercial tie-in or discount as a result of the use of a F & J engine is unknown. The same illustration of the 1907 Gollmar driver appeared as a feature in the May 1911 issue of *Gas Power* (page 58), a journal devoted to the application of internal combustion engines.¹⁹

Significantly, the Gollmar machine was originally described as "A Stake Driver and Puller," suggesting that the lifting action of the hammer



Fig. 19. Cap Curtis modified all of the Gollmar drivers which served with American Circus Corporation shows in the 1920s. Here he's personally putting a belt on the 1925 Hagenbeck-Wallace driver. Circus World Museum.

could somehow have been utilized for the pulling of stakes. One can readily envision how this might have been accomplished, though safety and guidance of the rapidly rising stake might have been issues of concern.

The frugal Gollmars could have assembled most of their stake driver from readily available parts. The wheels that carried it were of the fabricated-steel type usually seen on farm and construction equipment of the time. The driver sat on a seat that looks as though it was lifted off a light duty carriage or buggy. The overall configuration was similar to the Heiser/Bowdle design, except that there was a solid box enclosure for the stakes, the first documented in photography. Those on the Heiser machines were made with horizontal slats, a configuration likely to snag horizontally disposed stakes at one time or another. If this first driver had a weak point, it was the ladder chain which conveyed the engine power to the rollers. It was cheap, but it also wore out quickly.

Sometime before 1916, likely after 1910, the Gollmars acquired an entirely new driver for their own circus. Henry Moeller, a first cousin to the Gollmar brothers and a noted wagon builder in his own right, once stated that his firm made a stake

driver for the Gollmar show.

Perhaps it was the wagon for this new machine. Like other drivers then being built by the Moellers, they positioned the horizontal engine, drive system and hammer on a platform which was rotated into the desired position by a bar extending out to the operator's position. A flat fabric or leather belt, tightened by a tensioner, transmitted the power from the engine to the rotating roller. A more substantial frame, undergear and set of wheels were supplied to support it. Incorporated in the frame and casing of the

new driver were various metal members, testimony to the rough duty seen by the machine. In Gollmar route books of the early 1910s they called their device the "Automatic Stake Driver." Having achieved a degree of prosperity, the Gollmars retained their cousins, the Moellers to repair their wagons for the 1915 tour. Included in the billing was \$11.77 worth of work on the stake driver.²⁰ The stake driver undoubtedly went to James Patterson when he bought the Gollmar Bros. Circus at the end of the 1916 tour. He may have used it on the circuses and carnivals he operated into the next decade.

The March 8, 1917 *Baraboo News-Republic* noted that the Gollmars had authorized the W. A. Platt Machine Shop of Baraboo to build a stake driver for the John Robinson Circus. The discovery of this account revealed a hitherto unknown aspect of the Gollmar story. William A. Platt (1884-1943) operated what had formerly been Gollmar's Machine Shop at 220 Third Avenue in Baraboo, nearly directly across the street from the Moeller shop at 207-211 (later 215) Third Avenue.

The brick, two story shop, along with the adjacent Gollmar Garage, was demolished in 1994. The business had been founded by George James Gollmar (1851-1917), one of several Gollmar brothers who did not go into show business. He learned the machinist trade at the Chicago & North Western Railway Company

shops in Baraboo, where he eventually became the foreman. He left for Chicago in 1893 and was general foreman of a larger C & NW shop there. He returned to Baraboo by 1901 (an obituary says 1891) and established his own machine shop, the most complete in Sauk County. He invented and patented the Gollmar bell ringer for application to steam locomotives (U. S. Patents 449,904 and 970,703 of April 7, 1891 and September 20, 1910, respectively) and founded a company to manufacture them in 1890. His obituary in the February 16, 1917 *Baraboo Republic* stated, "Mr. Gollmar won his way through life by his own efforts. He always had a mind of his own and never made a move until after deliberation. He was a man of strong character and a neighbor worth having. He tried always to do his part, and when he did what appeared more than his just share, he felt that he had only done his duty. He will be remembered for the good traits."

Exactly when Gollmar sold his shop to Platt has not been determined, but it occurred prior to early 1915, when Platt billed Moeller's for work. His invoices bore the slogan "If you get it at Gollmar's Machine Shop it's good." It was a fine tribute to the man who founded the business.

The close proximity of the Gollmar/Platt and Moeller shops suggests that collaboration on various projects occurred. Indeed, surviving Moeller ledgers confirm that work was sublet to Platt for a variety of machine shop orders relating to circus work. Several of the references confirm shared work to create or repair a stake driver. It appears that sometimes the Gollmars and Platt got the order for a driver and sublet the wagon manufacture to Moeller. In other cases, Moeller won the basic contract and subbed the machine work to Gollmar/Platt. In this paper, we have attributed the driver's origin to the firm with which it can be most closely associated, yet one must acknowledge that

both firms made their own contribution to the finished project.

A good photograph of the 1917 John Robinson driver, taken about 1924, defines the Gollmar/Platt construction. Recognition of the salient features of the Gollmar driver enables us to identify at least six other drivers with Gollmar associations. They were all single hammer machines mounted on rotating decks fitted with a single fabric belt driving a dual-flanged wheel on the left side of the driver. The driver roller box had a trapezoidal cross-section with four visible shaft stubs protruding from it. The frame of the wagon was steel beams or channels, with a solid-sided wood box in front to hold stakes. There were two levers on the hammer housing, one to engage the lift function and the other to hold the raised hammer aloft. In lieu of the typical foot-operated shoe brakes, the Gollmar drivers were all outfitted with band brakes affixed to the inside face of the rear wheels. The arrangement must have proven superior to shoe brakes in stop-and-go movements that characterized driver operations. The engine on the Robinson driver was made by the Banner Engine Company of Lansing, Michigan. Whoever sold the Banner engine to the Gollmars later sold another for the same purpose the next year. One suspects that the Gollmar product had something of a reputation among showmen of the

Fig. 20. Photographs of the Gollmar-built driver on Sells-Floto in its original configuration are uncommon. This faded view is dated 1926. Circus World Museum.



time, a word of mouth knowledge which did not necessitate formal advertising in outdoor show journals.

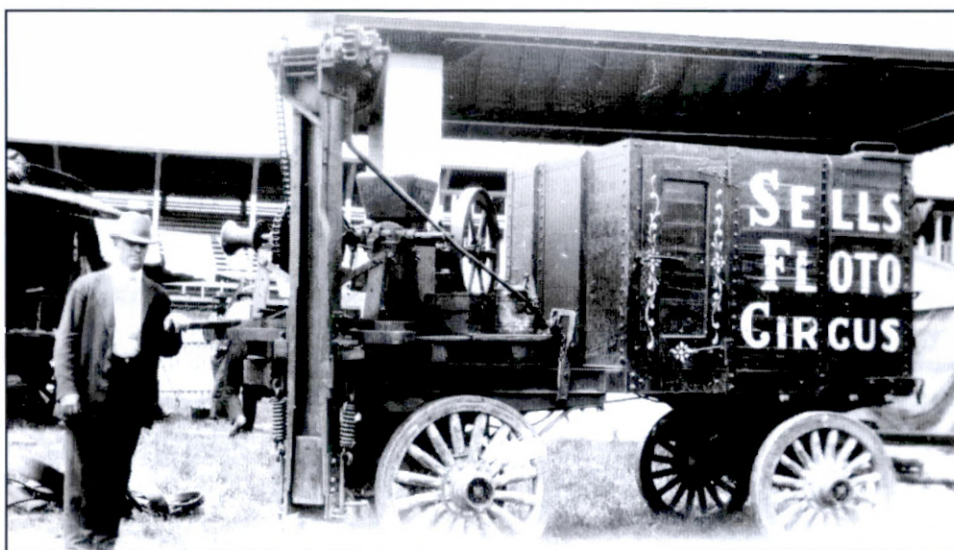
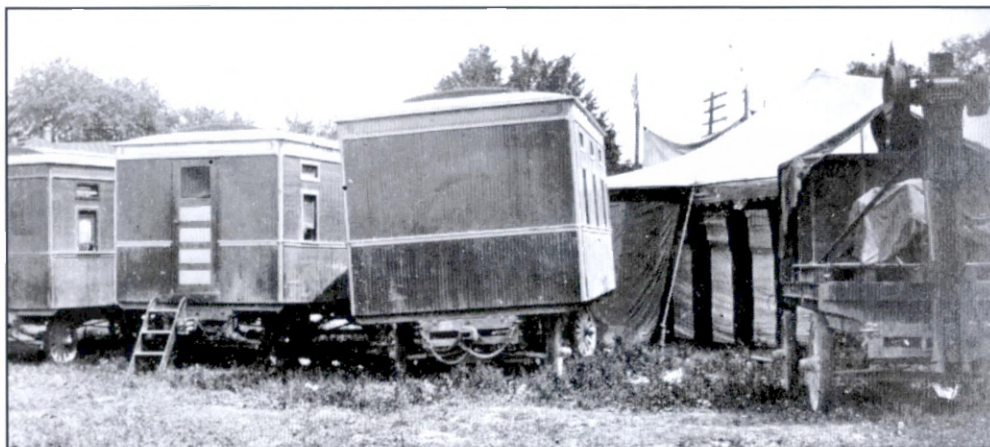
The John Robinson Circus of 1917, rolling forth on 45 cars, was the largest ever toured by Jerry Mugivan (1873-1930) and Bert Bowers (1874-1936). The Robinson driver built by Platt survived in original form on the show as late as 1924. A derivative machine can be seen in a 1930 photo, with the belt drive replaced by a motorcycle type chain. The modification was likely implemented by Cap Curtis, who modified several Gollmar/Platt drivers. It may have been sold off or dismantled sometime in the 1930s. It could also have gone to another American Circus Corporation show, but in any case it was gone by 1939.

In 1916 another Gollmar design driver was with the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus owned by Ed Ballard (1873-1936), then at its peak of 59 cars and the third largest circus in America. It may have been the same one listed as a show asset as early as 1912. Of this driver, the first on a non-Baraboo or non-Ringling owned circus, *The New York Clipper* of May 4, 1912 (page 12) had this to say regarding its justification: "Included in the working equipment of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Shows this season is a stake driver, an apparatus operated by a gasoline motor. The 'workingman' problem has grown to be a serious one for circus proprietors. It is at harvest time that the pinch comes, when the farmers, eager to get their crops under cover, offer all sorts of inducements. Workingmen with the circuses have taken advantage of this in the past, often leaving the big shows short of help and retarding their movements. The modern stake driver obviates much of this embarrassment. It enables the circus manager to get his canvas up on time in spite of late arrivals and the shortage of help." In the words of the writer, "the stake driver has become one of the most important parts of the big show equipment."

The *Billboard* of July 26, 1913 (page 51) provides at least one corroborative statement to the Hagenbeck-Wallace labor situation. It noted that when the Al G. Barnes Circus departed Webster City, Iowa on July 4, 1913 local farmers hired twenty razorbacks away from the show, forcing bandmen, performers and trainers to perform work-mens' duties. It further stated that all shows playing the corn belt had been similarly plagued by employee defections because of the harvest-time opportunities provided by farmers.

When Hagenbeck-Wallace was sold in 1918 there were two drivers with the property, but one was sold or transferred to another Corporation circus before 1922. A Gollmar-design Hagenbeck-Wallace driver is photographically documented in service as late as 1921. At the time it was powered by an Ottawa Manufacturing Company horizontal engine made in Ottawa, Kansas. The same machine was likely their number 36 stake driver, listed as fourteen feet long in loading orders of 1922 to 1924. In 1925 it was altered to a dual belt arrangement by Cap Curtis and was still with the show in 1927.²¹ A 1929 Hagenbeck-Wallace inventory fails to include any stake driver. One Hagenbeck-Wallace photo dated

Fig. 22. A very rare photograph of the 1918 Coop & Lent stake driver, far right, reveals that it was trailer mounted. It was the first motorized circus stake driver. Paul and Diane Guthel collection.



1932 shows a modified Gollmar-style driver driven by a Hercules Gas Engine Company machine built in Evansville, Indiana. Whether the photo is correctly dated is open to question. Sells-Floto, another big American Circus Corporation show, had a Gollmar style driver by 1921. It had a small enclosure on the platform enclosing the driver engine, one of very few so equipped. Perhaps it was one of the 1918 Hagenbeck-Wallace drivers, Mugivan and Bowers owning both shows by late 1920, making such a transfer possible. Intact through at least 1924, it was twice modified by Cap Curtis. By the time he completed his alterations it was a Curtis-design driver. In 1926 it was retrofitted with a wide, flat, fabric belt, different than that supplied by Gollmar/Platt. For the 1927 tour the belt was replaced by a chain drive along with other modifications. Power originated with an Ottawa horizontal engine. It was

Fig. 21. The former Gollmar driver on Sells-Floto was modified by Cap Curtis to a considerable extent. This circa 1927 version incorporated several improvements over earlier devices. Circus World Museum.

one of two drivers on the 1931 Sells-Floto tour, likely the last time it saw circus duty. By that time it had a Witte Engine Works engine made in Kansas City powering it.

The Gollmars furnished the first mechanical stake driver ever carried by a motorized circus. When the Coop & Lent Motorized Circus caravan took to the road in 1917, one of the trailers towed a stake driver. The mechanism was probably made in the Platt machine shop. Coop & Lent may have furnished one of their rubber-tired trailers to receive the driver. A photograph exists which reveals the Coop & Lent driver to have been a single hammer machine driven by a single fabric belt.²²

Notes

1. "How The Circus Is Put Up and Taken Down," *McClure's Magazine*, June 1895, pp. 49-61. While Moffett's narrative is thought to be generally reliable, we suspect that he confused the number of center poles and center pieces. The Barnum & Bailey big top covered three rings and two stages, indicating that it had five center pieces and six center poles. John Hunt

was Superintendent of Canvas for Barnum & Bailey only one season, 1894, which dates the observations. A similar description of tent erection is "Putting up the Big City of White Tents" in the 1895-1896 Ringling Bros. Route book, pp. 5-12. Also see Chapter V, "A Firefly Layout," in Edwin P. Norwood, *The Other Side of the Circus* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1938).

2. Circus Galleries, John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art; photo, 1899 John Robinson Route Book, p. 76; letter dated October 10, 1950 from William H. Curtis to George L. Chindahl, Chindahl Collection, Box 3, Folder 6, Circus World Museum (hereafter CWM).

3. "Pop-corn George," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 8, 1884.

4. 1904 Barnum & Bailey Route Book, p. 89.

5. The author is indebted to a number of people who kindly and generously shared their knowledge of the circus and mechanical devices. Thanks are extended to Robert S. MacDougall, Fred D. Pfening Jr., Fred D. Pfening III, William L. Rhodes and Howard C. Tibbals.

6. *Baraboo Weekly News*, February 7, 1918; Earl Chapin May, "The Ever-Changing Never Changing Circus," *Shrine Magazine*, July 1927, p. 28.

7. Letter dated October 11, 1949 from William H. Curtis to George L. Chindahl, Chindahl Papers, Box 4, Folder 22, CWM. Chindahl later asked Curtis about the man in question, but there is no record of Curtis response.

8. 1897 Ringling Bros. Circus Route Book, pages 119 and 101. The Layer Out position is described on page 37. *Billboard*, December 9, 1905, p. 16; February 24, 1940, p. 33. *The Show World*, April 2, 1910, p. 26. All of the other listings are from route books.

9. Charles Andress Papers, CWM.

10. Both letters are in the accumulated Ringling Bros. Circus correspondence at CWM but their origin is not recorded. They may have come from Charles Andress, whose papers were given to CWM by his wife.

11. Piqua City Directories, 1898, 1902, 1906-1907; James Oda, *Piqua Industry 1800-1900*, p. 5.

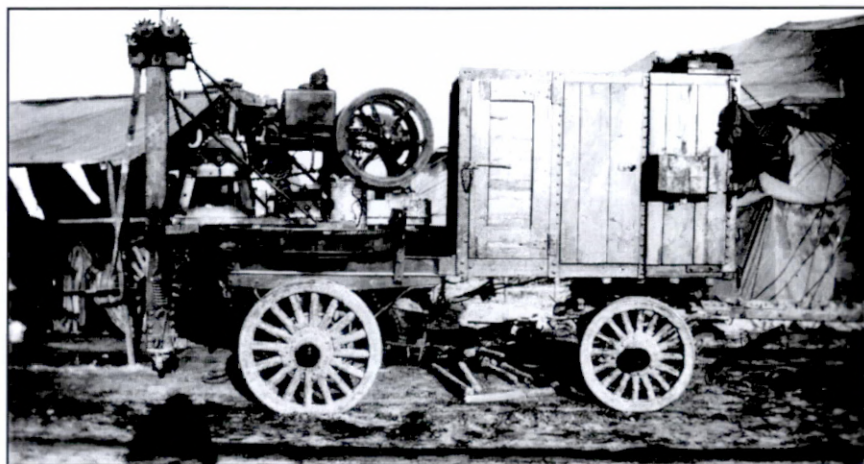


Fig. 23. A 1927 photo of the Curtis-altered driver on Sells-Floto. Pfening Archives.

12. The letter is printed in C. P. Fox, *Ticket to the Circus* (Seattle, WA: Superior, 1959) p. 93.

13. Biographical data on Andress is in *Billboard*, September 23, 1933, p. 27; *White Tops*, January 1930, p. 9; Bert Chipman, *Hey Rube*, (Hollywood, CA: Print Shop, 1933), p. 129.

14. Charles Andress Papers, CWM.

15. 1906 Barnum & Bailey Route Book, page 17; 1907 Route Book, page 17. We suspect that D. Robertson of 1905 and D. Robinson of 1906-1907 are one and the same individual.

16. See Greg Parkinson, "James A. Bailey's Last Parades 1903 & 1904," *Bandwagon*, May-June 1982, pp. 4-10 for a discussion of the Barnum & Bailey logistical problems.

17. "The Gasoline Engine and the Circus," *The Gas Engine*, June 1905, p. 173.

18. Manuscript in Earl Chapin May Papers, Box 3, Folder 3, CWM. May had previously assigned invention of the driver to Andress in his 1927 article; see note 6.

19. The author is indebted to Verne Kindschi of Prairie du Sac, WI for information regarding the Fuller & Johnson firm and its engines. He is the author of *The Fuller & Johnson Story* (Prairie du Sac, WI: Giegerich's Sons, Inc., 1993) and also maintains the surviving engine registers of the F & J. Gasoline engine expert Lyle Oppermann of Baraboo also aided in identifying many of the engines used on various circus stake drivers. A

useful guide on the topic is C. H. Wendel, *American Gas Engines Since 1872* (Sarasota, FL: Crestline, 1983).

20. Ledger 1913-1917, Moeller Papers, CWM.

21. *Billboard*, December 7, 1918, p. 26; January 4, 1919, P. 4; photograph, Fred D. Pfening, Jr. Archives.

22. *Billboard*, April 21, 1917, P. 26; Paul and Diane Gutheil photograph.

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E. E. COLEMAN'S CIRCUS

Season Of 1929

By Joseph T. Bradbury

E. E. Coleman of Dayton, Ohio had three forays into canvas circus operations. His first came in 1929, the second in late 1930, and the final from 1943 to 1945. All three involved different equipment and three titles were used. His final show was covered in the September-October 1990 Bandwagon. This article is about his first show, the E. E. Coleman Circus in 1929.

Elbert E. Coleman was born in St. Louis, Missouri on September 5, 1893 and entered the amusement business in 1921. In January 1925 he became manager and lessee of the Rialto theater in Dayton, Ohio. In 1928 he toured the Jesse James Dramatic Wild West Show under canvas, playing one night stands. The outfit moved on about six trucks and had a truck-mounted air calliope.

Coleman decided to field a motorized under-canvas circus in 1929. In

Truck used by the Jesse James show in 1928. All illustrations are from the Albert Conover collection unless otherwise noted.

all probability he used as much of the dramatic show equipment as he could to frame his new circus. One of his first purchases was the elephant Virginia from the Sells-Floto Circus in Peru, Indiana in late 1928. On December 24, 1928 Coleman wrote to William P. Hall in Lancaster, Missouri: "Would like to ask if you would recommend C. T. (Rebel) Casey as a good elephant trainer and elephant man. Also, have you a steam calliope for sale. I am looking for one for a motorized show." Coleman didn't get a steamer from Hall, but in 1933 he obtained one that was formerly on a river boat.

He again wrote Hall on April 17, 1929: "Have you any elephants for sale, if so, what is size, age, and price? Have you any camels, or other small animals for sale. Please let me know at once."

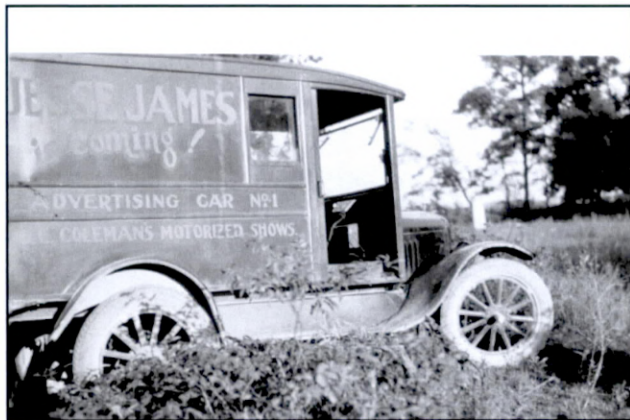
No additional elephants came from Hall or anybody else, making Virginia the entire 1929 herd. Virginia was purchased by W. P. Hall in 1921 from Louis Ruhe and was soon sold to the John Robinson Circus in time for the 1921 season.

She was a small baby and a photo shows her being carried in a cage wagon's compartment that season. In 1922 she went to Sells-Floto and remained there through the 1928 season.

Evidently Coleman purchased her soon after the 1928 season ended. Virginia was small enough to be transported in a motor vehicle by Coleman. Large elephants in the late 1920s, such as those on Mighty Haag and M. L. Clark had to walk between stands.

The first *Billboard* mention of Coleman's new show came in the March 23, 1929 issue: "E. E. Coleman, general manager of Coleman Motorized Circus, has engaged E. G. Smith as general agent, who will have two [advance] trucks. A car will be held in reserve for opposition or extra billing. The outfit will have a 70 foot round top with one or two thirties, carry a side show and move on 14 trucks. There will be a Tanglely air calliope in a spe-

Advance billing truck used by Jesse James in 1928 and Coleman in 1929.





Air calliope truck used on Jesse James in 1928.

cial built truck body and two electric light plants. Dean Sautelle will be assistant manager; John T. Sullivan, boss canvas man and E. R. Negley, head cook. The show will open April 27."

Additional information appeared in the April 27 *Billboard*: "E. E. Coleman's Motorized Circus will open the season in Dayton on May 4. As the work of building and overhauling progressed it was found that the old quarters were too small and new quarters have been established on Philadelphia Street in the city proper. Dean Sautelle, assistant manager, has arrived. The big show performance win be presented under a 70 foot round top with two 30 foot middles and the side show in a 50 x 100 top. Jim Bariet has been engaged as head mechanic and electrician and will have 15 trucks in the lineup. George F. Delaney will be the bandmaster and the cookhouse will be in charge of Kirby Negley. Manager Coleman also has the Rialto Theater presenting musical comedy and pictures."

The air calliope mentioned in *Bill-*

Seat truck used on Jesse James and E. E. Coleman.



board was a 43 whistle Tangley Calliaphone playable by music rolls or keyboard. Photos show it mounted in a straight bed truck neatly painted and lettered E. E. Coleman's Circus and Trained Animals and lettered on the cab doors "Two Shows Daily." The removable cover over the oval openings on the sides were painted with wild animal scenes.

Two trucks were decorated with carvings for parade. The carvings on both vehicles came from a single wagon built around 1914 for the C. L. Alderfer Circus, an outfit moved by equine power. The carvings were from the Sullivan and Eagle wagon works in Peru, Indiana. The wagon was later the property of Maloon Bros. Circus out of Union City, Indiana, owned by Connie Maloon and C. L. Alderfer from 1919-1925. That show was purchased late in 1925 by John Pluto of Baltimore, Maryland and had been stored in Ohio.

Pluto never operated it. A photo of this wagon on a Maloon Bros. lot

appeared on the front cover of the December 1957 *Bandwagon*. F. C. Fisher of Peru, Indiana, who provided the photo, advised that he had been told the wagon was too heavy for an overland show and too light for railroad use. Coleman purchased the carvings from John Pluto.

The central carvings on the straight bed truck were different, a male figure on one side, a female on the other. The other carvings were mounted on an open shell type truck used as a bandwagon. Both vehicles were obviously designed for parade purposes.

A straight-bed truck served as the office-ticket wagon. Although a few



Marquee and big top of Jesse James and E. E. Coleman shows.

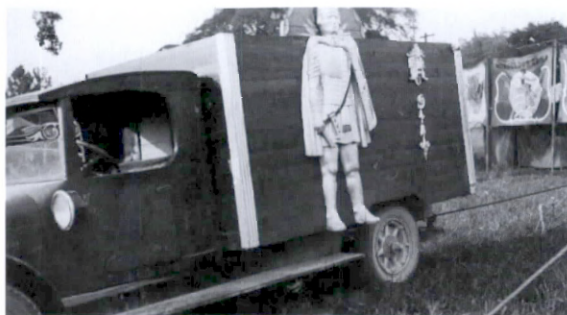
Bandwagon built for the Coleman show in 1929.



semis were used by motorized shows in 1929, they were still quite rare and didn't come into widespread use until the early 1930s.

The only other known source of equipment for the show came from Ray Thompson in Peru, Indiana who sold Coleman two cages, one of which housed a lion.

A daily street parade was presented using the two tableau trucks with the carvings, the air calliope, riders, cages, and the elephant Virginia, plus perhaps the ticket truck and



One of the carvings from the Alderfer bandwagon.

other vehicles. The march would have been adequate for a circus this size in the late 1920s.

By the time the show opened Coleman had a new letterhead with the title in red and other lettering in blue. There were two designs, also in blue, a bare-back rider on the left and a lion's head at right.

The Isaac Marcks notes say the show had a camel and a zebra in the menagerie as well as a number of horses and ponies. Earlier reports that Coleman's circus would open May 4 in Dayton, Ohio proved in error. Instead, the initial stand came on May 6 in Fairfield, Ohio, near Dayton, followed by Yellow Springs the next day.

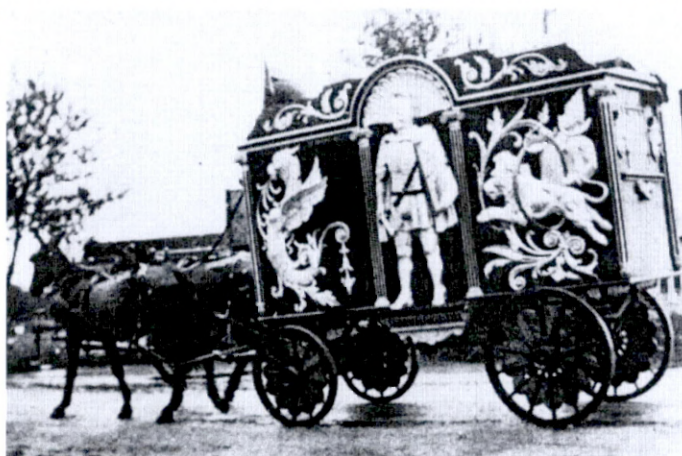
No opening stand review appeared in *Billboard*. The program was presented in a two ring format with trained horses, ponies, and the elephant. Photos show Ray Herbert with a trained horse and another of several menage riders. Isaac Marcks said the performance ran one hour and twenty minutes. He listed several performers; however, he did not indicate which were on the show when Coleman owned it or after he sold it a few months later. A later *Billboard* report states there was considerable turnover at that time, in staffers, workmen, and performers. Marcks' notes list dog trainer Cal Streur, the Lurches, and the Frank Lazell family presenting acts.

Coleman in a letter

to *Billboard* later in the year said early routing took it southward to the Cincinnati area, then north to Michigan for a few stands. It was in Indiana when he sold it.

The show played Morrow, Ohio on May 15 and was at Ripley, Ohio on May 22.

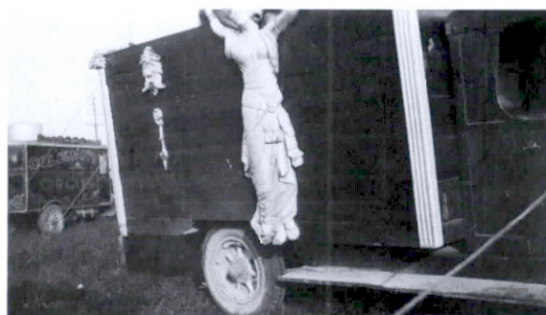
The Coleman daily statement for Ripley is in the Circus World Museum archives. Cookhouse expense for the day was \$18.40 and gasoline was \$19.26. Total receipts



The C. L. Alderfer bandwagon that supplied the carvings for the Coleman trucks. Fred Dahlinger collection.

for both performances, aftershow concert, and side show were \$85.20, while expenses were \$65.03. Of special note is fact the show paid hotel

The air calliope truck with Coleman title in 1929.



Another of the carvings from the Alderfer bandwagon.

room charges for Coleman, a person named Travis, bandleader Delaney, and four other people. The latter were possibly other members of the band. In the earlier years of overland circuses staffers and performers

were housed in lodging places each evening, but by the late 1920s this was very rare, as house trailers and living quarters built on trucks were available. One trouper who went back to overland show operation in the late 1920s described the latter as early day campers.

After the opening nothing was published in *Billboard* until this ad appeared in the May 11 issue: "Wanted. good

mechanic. Other good and useful people write. Coleman's Circus Corp., 12 South Jefferson Street, Dayton, Ohio."

Coleman's Circus Corporation must have been the show's corporate name. It was never mentioned in trade publications if anyone other than Coleman was financially interested in the circus; however, some of Coleman's family probably had money in the show.

Big news came in the August 5 *Billboard*: "According to reports Johnny Pluto has bought the Coleman Motorized Circus and the show is now being operated under the management of Mike Pluto."

Not much is known about the early circus background of John



Pluto of Baltimore, Maryland. In an interview with Floyd King in 1953 Tom Parkinson noted Pluto had been a concessionaire on Martin J. Downs' Cole Bros. Circus in the early 1900s. He also made considerable money making and distributing punchboards. Until the 1930s these were very popular and were considered the poor man's Las Vegas. For a nickel punch one might win a dollar, but most often nothing. They were found mainly in stores but were often banned as gambling devices. Pluto must have greatly increased his bank account because in the 1920s he was active in purchasing small and medium circuses, both flat car and gilly railers as well as overland outfits. Most of the time, however, he operated them for a very short time and sometimes not at all.

Pluto bought the 15 car Golden Bros. Circus from Mike Golden in 1921 and operated it from July through September before selling it to George Christy. In October 1925 he was half owner when Floyd and Howard King bought the 15 car Gentry-Patterson Circus, but he sold his interest to the Kings in February 1926, before the show opened. In

The side show and big top of the E. E. Coleman Circus in 1929.

late 1925 Pluto also purchased the Maloon Bros. overland circus which he never toured. In 1926 he bought the two-car Cole Bros. Circus from Elmer Jones. He told the circus world the show would be increased to three cars, but this never came about and again it failed to troupe. In 1929 Pluto leased the Cole Bros. title



The cookhouse of the Coleman circus in 1929.

to the King brothers who used it on a 10 car railer in 1929 and 1930.

Pluto's purchase of the E. E. Coleman Circus was his last of his several sawdust ventures during the

The ticket wagon, marquee and big top of the E. E. Coleman Circus in 1929.

decade. The Circus World Museum has a file of Pluto's correspondence regarding the Coleman purchase including copies of telegrams and letters. Pluto contacted Coleman very early in the season about his desire to buy the show. A wire sent from Coleman to Pluto on June 16 read: "Will take nine thousand cash offered this in time. Advise today." A month went by until Coleman again wired Pluto on July 15. "If you mean

business send deposit to Dayton today. Have clear title to everything. Advise immediately."

Coleman sent another wire that same day: "Having papers drawn up giving you clear title to all show property. Your man can come here or I will be on show Tuesday to settle. Money must be

in town we do business in or arranged so I can get all cashed at time bill of sale is transferred. Advise."

Michael Pluto was sent by his brother John to Wolcotteville, Indiana where the show was playing to close the sale. On July 15 at 3 p. m. John wired his brother: "Coleman will be on show Tuesday with all papers drawn up. Will wire you money to close deal, but obtain every-



thing first or hold back part cash to guarantee."

At 5 p. m. the same day Michael wired John: "Something wrong. Coleman aunt, uncle interested. Asked clear title, bill of sale. No response. Malone [Maloon] phoned Coleman to have clear title. Deal off, leaving for home morning."

It appears Coleman's aunt and uncle, who must have had a financial interest in the show, questioned the sale and held it up temporarily. There were telephone calls between Michael Pluto and Coleman, who was still in Dayton. Michael went to Dayton to meet personally with Coleman, after which he wired brother John on July 16: "Come here to meet Coleman to close deal. Holding show at Wolcottville till Saturday. Angola played if deal closed. Will wire agent to bill Orland, Indiana for Saturday, Bronson, Reading, Quincy, Hudson, Michigan till we get paper ahead. Plenty repair work. Will need four C on hand. Stay close till I meet Coleman."

The purchase of the show was then finally completed. In the deal Pluto received the right to use the Coleman title for the rest of the season or until the billing paper already on hand or on order was exhausted. John sent Robert Dennard to the show to act as secretary and manager of the road office.

With the new ownership, a number of Coleman employees left the show. Finding replacements proved difficult. Mike wired John while still in Wolcottville on July 20: "People can't be got in this section. Same as China. We are heating the wires and telephone for help. Route as follows. Reading, Monday 22; Hudson, 23; Morenci, 24; Blissfield, 25; Tecumseh, 26; Chelsea, 27, Saturday. All Michigan, answer Orland, Indiana."

Later on July 20 John Pluto received another wire from brother Mike and Bob Dennard: "Wire received regarding parade costumes. You better take care [of] out of Baltimore office. I have hands full keeping stuff together. You do more with Mugivan than I can and better equipped for service from there. Telegraph and telephone service very lacking in this section. Got the show into Orland, Indiana last night and today few breakdowns. Plenty of



The big top and dressing top of the Coleman show in 1929.

repair on fight plant, calliope to follow. Trouble getting parts. Can't give many details until we have show moving."

It appears the show's vehicles and other equipment were in very poor condition and that Pluto had taken a skinning on the deal. Mike's July 22 wire to John from Reading, Michigan tells the sad tale: "Too many repairs to make while in action. More occurring every move. Should stop at Hudson and rebuild and get help. Lion cage turned over. Cab smashed, lucky lion did not escape. Five miles further, axle broke on big truck. Towed five machines over jump today. Can't make the grade in these present conditions. Must lay over, get help, and reorganize our only salvation. Both wore out plenty of grease. Can't hold Maloon any longer. What have you done in regard to tickets. We need plenty of cooperation from that end. When possible have to get material parts we need in these towns. Answer at once. One show yesterday. No concert or side show. Agent three days ahead of show. Unable to get paper to him on account of poor service. He is doing all he can to keep show moving and staying away from big shows and carnivals. That is why we have route as it stands. Give us action."

Mike wired his brother again at 10 p.m. the same day: "Stop at Hudson repair organized. Would be advisable

The side show bannerline in 1929.



you come on show. Need money or send Jerome's cousin. Ask if experienced Kohler light plant good mechanic [available]. Answer to your ad sent to Hudson. Lost horse today. Not much value. Letter following; explaining all."

The promised letter, which included a photo, possibly from a newspaper, of the show's elephant, read: "This is your elephant Virginia, a fast working bull and a nice little outfit after it is put into shape, but right now it is grief and will be till it is put into shape. Now, I have my hands full. I have bills to get straight but I just can't get time enough to eat a meal let alone to write. Bob [Dennard] does not know a thing about a car and I buy all material to make these repairs. The light plant would not run as Coleman let everything run down. The calliope would not play. I had to sent to Chicago to get parts, also different places.

"Now tonight is the first time calliope played in three weeks and plants run good tonight. Over in Orland, Indiana we would have had a good show, but plants would not run so people got tired waiting for light and went home.

"To do the job it will take money to do it. It will also need your attention for a while till it gets going right, so don't get disgusted. I am not spending your money for fun, only for what must be gotten. It is now 1 a. m. I must start at 6 a. m. so will close. With best regards, your brother, Mike Pluto."

Also from Reading, Michigan on July 22 Bob Dennard wrote John

Pluto and was even more emphatic about the sad state of the show and the necessity of stopping in Hudson to reorganize and rebuild: "Enclosed find statement for paper on hand from Erie Printing Co. According to Engle statement none has been drawn since July 1.

"We are in a hell of a mess and no help or material to get out of it unless we lay over, rebuild, and organize. Traveling we are just in the same condition to get anything as if we would be in China. Everything and every department is broke down. Absolutely impossible to get anything in these towns or get railroad or bus service that leads anywhere. And the advance is not far enough ahead giving us time enough to have things we want shipped from any distance giving them time enough to reach said point to date. We have three musicians, two cornet players and drummer—that includes leader. Leader is tough and trying to get men. There is not a truck around here that there is not something wrong with it. Calliope out of order. Sent for parts, should arrive here today. Electric light plant running, under protest. Ordered parts arrived this a. m.. Cookhouse fitted like a hobo camp, no cooking utensils, cooking in lard cans.

"Can't pick up anything in these towns. Too short of help to send anyone away to get anything. Mike and I have been so damn busy since I have been here that I can't give matters the attention that I was sent here to do. Have not had time to enter a thing in the books. All time taken up getting in and out, carrying lumber, pulling stakes and suffering plenty of grief. Everybody here is with it. Performers help on canvas and drive trucks. Bandleader drives truck, elec-



The E. E. Coleman Circus on a lot in 1929.

tric plant man is the mechanic. He keeps the trucks in repair with his plant out of order, and 20 damn machines out of order he simply can't do it with more breakdowns every day. Two sledge hammers around the big top, and every other department equipped in about the same proportion. I got your wire to send ad to Billboard. I had about thirty minutes to frame one and get it in the last mail out to reach Cincinnati, Ohio before closing of press Sunday. Put special delivery stamp on same. And in the rush after it was on its way, I realized I left out a whole lot I should have put in, side show people lowest salary etc. Now John there is no ifs, ands, or buts about this show has got to lay over to try and keep moving in its present condition without help which we are going to lose what we got of them.

"We can't give a parade without musicians and without some kind of showing we ain't going to get any money, so the wind up [is] we are going to get stranded in some four corners without help, performers, anything else. There is [the] making of a damn good show here, but it has got to be rebuilt and added to before anything can be done. And brother there is no damn time like the pres-

The midway of the E. E. Coleman Circus with one of the parade trucks in foreground.



ent and that means immediately. Now John you are in Baltimore telling us about the route, this town to that town as you name. If you were here and knew the conditions as we know about getting in and out from town to town and the best interest of rolling stock know a lot of that routing this town to that town in our judgment.

"What have you done in regards to show tickets, there is no reserve tickets around here, no side show tickets. We can get by with big show tickets for awhile by using the same ones over and over. Without a doubt this is the poorest damn equipped outfit I ever saw. It looks all right standing still, but moving it is a lot of damn grief, so get busy and give us instructions and action at once. It will cost money which will get money. And when I say at once I don't mean maybe. Mike and myself are putting all that is in us into it. And we are pretty well worn out of vitality and need cooperation from that end at once."

The letter covered five pages. On the back was penned another note: "Inclosed find agents daily report. Have some printed by Lex Press at once. [General agent] Engle has enough for this week that should last. And if you have not ordered tickets do so at once. This is the last of letterheads. Saturday we gave night performance. Found new band leader, used there. Band gave no concert or side show. Receipts big show total \$97.75. We will give a night show here. Now John I think the best thing you can do is come over here at once, and give this situation a bird's eye view. Then you will realize the contents of this letter don't mean maybe.

"One of the horse's back leg paralyzed and had to dispose of him, meaning slaughter house. Mike changed his shirt today, first time

since he left Chicago. Yesterday Mike was assistant master mechanic helping to get the trucks over the road. Out of 38 miles he said he walked 36 of them. We left Orland 8 a. m., most of outfit arrived in the afternoon. Walking horse arrived after dark. Getting lion truck back on road took a lot of time. Engle broke truck, is still 19 miles out, so we have not got axles."

John Pluto realized that these cries for help from his brother and Dennard were from the captain and first mate of a sinking ship. He acted immediately, giving the order to stop at Hudson, Michigan to reorganize and repair. The show halted at Hudson with no performances on July 23 and the revitalized outfit resumed its route in there on August 3.

A copy of the statement of paper on hand from Erie Litho dated July 23, 1929 covered sizes from a half sheet to 9 sheets in 14 different styles, plus titled streamers. In all probability they were stock pictorials with title reading E. E. Coleman's Circus. The prices were three cents for half sheets and six cents for one sheets. A nine sheet litho could be purchased for 54 cents.

The *Billboard* ad sent by Dennard appeared in the July 27 issue: "Motorized circus en route can use account of enlarging, performers, clowns, musicians. People for all departments. Side show manager, colored band for side show. Show in southern Michigan now. Pay own wires or write, Circus Office, 110 W. Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland."

An ad in the August 3 *Billboard* read, "Circus Motorized wants people in all departments, few more performers. Clowns, musicians, ticket sellers, two candy butchers, two more bill posters. Useful people always considered for Pluto-Coleman's Circus. Southern Michigan. Now under new management. M. Pluto, manager." The Baltimore address was again listed.

An undated telegram sent from John to Mike in Hudson read: "My wires do not carry in pockets. Put in



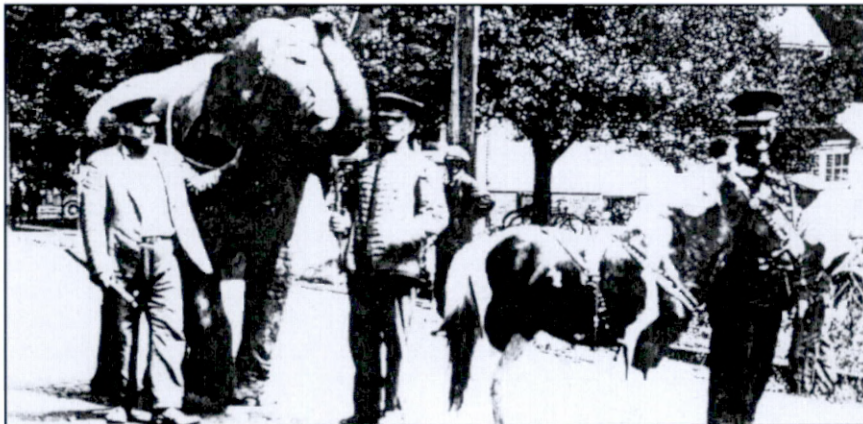
Three riders in the back yard of the Coleman show in 1929.

briefs where you can read and re-read them, also Bob in ticket wagon, I always re-read everything 5 or 6 times. Tickets and printed matter sending Friday sure. Also advising Erie to send all paper on hand to Hudson as have arranged for Cole Bros. paper which expect start using August fifteenth or sooner. Have Bob arrange about Coleman dates with Erie if none, also strips."

Evidently John Pluto intended to start billing the show as Cole Bros., a title he owned but was currently leased to Floyd and Howard King who were touring the title. It is the opinion of the author that no Cole paper was used in late August and September. In *Billboard* advertisements and an article the Pluto-Coleman title was used, but it is not known if this title was actually used to bill the show.

As requested by Mike, John Pluto contacted Jerry Mugivan about purchasing costumes for parade and spec as well as other equipment. A copy of a bill of sale in the Pluto papers lists property sold by the John Robinson Shows Company, July

The elephant Virginia in a 1929 Coleman parade.



30, 1929, signed by Mugivan to Pluto for five hundred and one dollars. Items sold included 2 dog chariots, 1 elephant tub, 2 swinging ladders, 6 nickel plated posts, 6 old chairs, 2 long spears, 3 animal trainers coats, 4 saddle covers, 5 small capes, 6 two piece suits, 1 bull fight suit, 3 turbans, 4 caps for ladies, 6 drivers caps, 2 butterfly for iron jaw, 4 orange caps, 4 ballet dresses, 1 large elephant blanket, 12 gongs, 1 elephant harness, 1 set pony harness with collars, 1 old umbrella and pipe, 3 old baskets, 1 complete prima donna outfit, 1 large cape, 8 band capes, 1 hat and cape for bandleader, 5 ladies suits, 10 headpieces, 4 ticket sellers caps, 4 red caps, and 1 miniature cage.

If all of this was needed by the show at Hudson then Dennard had it right when he wrote that the Coleman outfit was the worst equipped show he ever saw. It was hoped that the material would help transform the rundown show into a pretty nice little circus when it took to the road again on August 3.

The August 10 *Billboard* covered the reopening with this short piece: "Pluto-Coleman Circus has been reorganized and opened in Hudson, Michigan, Saturday (3) within ten days after the new owners took charge. The show was rebuilt and all new trucks included, along with a specially built tableaux. There is also new wardrobe for parade and spectacle. Both parade and performance have been highly commended by the public."

This advertisement was in the same issue: "Can use all around peo-

ple suitable for motorized circus. Acts, doing two or more turns. Double trapeze acts. Riding acts. One more ground act. Four or five family acts doing three or more turns. Chelsea, Michigan, August 7; Leslie, 8; Mason, 9; East Lansing, 10. Pay own wire or write. Address Pluto-Coleman Circus."

It is highly doubtful that "all new" trucks were added, but most or all had to be worked over. The title of Pluto-Coleman Circus was probably used only for identification in the circus world. It was probably not painted on the show's vehicles or printed matter. No photos taken after Pluto took over have turned up to answer the question of the new title being used on the equipment or billing.

Other Michigan dates in August were Durand, 11; Ovid, 15; St. John, 16; St. Louis, 17; and Vassar, 19. For a couple of weeks a single date would appear in the *Billboard* route section such as Romeo, Michigan, August 21, and Carey, Ohio, 25. Leaving Michigan, the circus moved into Ohio and Kentucky.

It appears John Pluto joined and traveled with the show after it resumed its tour in Michigan. From Mt. Gilead, Ohio, August 31 he wired Thomas Shriver, Vice President, National Marine Bank in Baltimore: "If possible send me one grand here today by Western Union, I may and may not need it."

Again on September 9 from Jackson, Ohio Pluto wired Shriver at the bank: "Today wire me eight hundred dollars here Jackson, Ohio, Western Union."

The September 7 *Billboard* contained this ad. "Pluto-Coleman Circus wants to join immediately for long season. Electrician, family acts, comedy acts, clowns, candy butchers. For the advance, two more fast stepping bill posters. Oscar Wiley, wire. Musicians Homer Friend, Steve Bowman, McJurado, wire. Walter Scott, why don't you answer wires? Newcomerstown, Wednesday; Denison, Thursday; Barnesville, Friday; Caldwell, Saturday; Oar Hill, Monday, all Ohio."

As the circus continued on southward into Kentucky problems with the trucks continued. On September 13 John Pluto wired his banker for



Ray Herbert and his mane horse in the back yard in 1929.

another thousand, saying "Reason motor truck trouble."

The circus advertised again in the September 28 *Billboard* for: "Useful people in all departments and department heads. Side show people. Lunch stand and ball game open. Can use boss canvas man. Long season. If wire, pay own. Coleman Circus. Lafollette. Tennessee.

The long season promised in the ad did not materialize as the show closed two days later at Sunbright, Tennessee on September 30. Evidently John Pluto had had enough of the circus business and refused to pour any more money into the venture.

The November 2 *Billboard* carried an article sent by Keith Buckingham, the show's general agent: "The E. E. Coleman Circus was secured by John Pluto the last of July and from the day of its opening in Hudson, Michigan on August 3, it never had a winning day.

"It was closed by the trustees in Sunbright, Tennessee on September 30 and moved to Oneida, Tennessee where it is now waiting for the courts to settle claims against it. From the day it opened until it closed, it never had a chance. Some of the folks said it had a jinx on it, some said it was mis-management, some said it was not billed properly, but personally I think it was just one of those shows that was never intended to make money.

"In the first place, there was not one colored person connected with it; it never had a drunk on the lot, it never had a real game of chance among its own people, and last but

not least, it opened in dry weather and closed wet. For six weeks it moved along fine, making jumps from 8 to 100 miles and it lost but one day.

"This little show had as nice a performance as one would want to see, and there were some 40 odd people connected with it. John Pluto was owner and manager; Jack Lehair was superintendent, his wife, Lois, chef; Ralph Duval, superintendent of animals and worked Miss Virginia, the elephant; Robert Dennard was secretary; Lloyd Stoltz, bandmaster. We had some real advance people on this show. The writer was general agent, replaced by Harry Oliver, and he in turn by Jack Lehair. We had as bill posters, Art Caron and C. A. Blue. Earnest Jones was on lithos. We had Sy Harris as side show manager and on reserved seats. He also worked with Claude Jarbo on candy stands, Mrs. Jarbo was on candy stands was in the side show and made spec. Betty Western was in the side show and Mr. Pluto's private secretary. Johnson, the magician, was with us and Frank Lazell and family. In clown alley we had O. B. Boes and Roy Burke. For some weeks we had Col. Drako and his famous dogs. The Lerches were with us as well as Estelle Duvall working dogs and doing swinging ladders. This little show had a spec. In the title role was Cliff Laverne. A great deal of our performance was done by dogs and ponies and the entire show ran about one hour and twenty minutes.

"The show consisted of 15 trucks and a number of private cars, and played Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Why it was a failure no one knows. Mr. Pluto spent money and plenty of it. When the show arrived in Jellico, Tennessee, on September 21, he admitted that it was at the end of the rope. We appointed three trustees to try their luck. They did so and owing to the rain, muddy lots, and several trucks breaking down, they decided to give up the ghost. William York was appointed receiver." Interestingly, Buckingham failed to mention Michael Pluto.

A week later the November 9 *Billboard* reported: "E. E. Coleman, writing from Dayton, Ohio says, 'In this week's *Billboard*, I noticed an

item about E. E. Coleman's Circus closing. You didn't state about the show the entire season, only from August 3 forward.

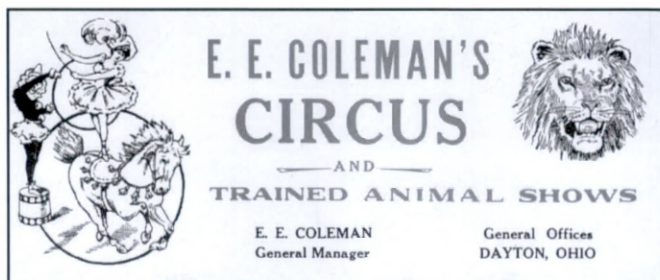
"I opened the show in Fairfield [Ohio] on May 6 in rain. We had the tent packed, in spite of bad weather. Moving there Virginia the elephant stampeded and was not captured until late in the afternoon. She was brought on the lot in Yellow Springs, Ohio at 8 o'clock in the evening and worked the night performance. No matinee was given there as we arrived late on account of the elephant. No damage was done except to two farm fences. I fixed one with passes, other with a little money. But this proved to be wonderful advertising. The night show didn't have all the trucks on it until it was out three days.

"The first two weeks it rained about every day and horses were used to pull on and off the lot. The show went towards Cincinnati and the southern part of the state to New Boston, then north to Michigan. I had the show in northern Indiana when I sold to John Pluto. I had some poor stands and some very good ones and as a whole I did just fair. I didn't have to sell but I found running a theater and a circus was too much for me, so sold the circus, the title to be used only this season or until the paper I had bought ran out.

"When the show was transferred to Mr. Pluto about all the people I had left—performers, band men, workingmen, also people on the advance. It seemed to me Mr. Pluto had it tough right from the start and I couldn't help but admire him for sticking to it until the very last. During the time I ran this show we didn't make over a 35 miles jump—only on Sundays. We paraded every day at one o'clock.

"I expect to stay out of active circus business this coming season, as the theater is enough to handle. However, I expect to enter the circus field again."

The November 23 *Billboard* recorded the final chapter of the Coleman show: "After seven weeks of litigation in the Tennessee courts, the creditors of John Pluto, owner of



Letterhead used by Coleman in 1929. Pfening Archives.

the Coleman-Pluto Circus, were paid off by the receiver, William York, and the creditors and Mr. Pluto's attorneys at Huntsville, Tennessee, November 11, at fifty cents on the dollar.

"The decree for the settlement was handed down by Honorable Judge Wallace of Clinton, Tennessee who stated that it was the first time in the history of his judicial experience that a group of showfolk received compensation for labor liens.

"The entire personnel that was stationed at High Point, Tennessee writes to thank the receiver Mr. York for his kindness and consideration, one of the members advises.

"It may be of interest to showmen to learn that the show property was disposed of to people outside the show world with the exception of the elephant, which was sold to William P. Hall of Lancaster, Missouri."

Tennessee saw the death of two circuses in the fall of 1929. Besides the Coleman-Pluto outfit, Floyd and

E. E. Coleman and his elephant Virginia in 1929.



Howard King's 15 car Gentry Bros. Circus went broke in Paris, Tennessee on October 23. Generally, the 1929 season had been a good one for circuses, although the Buck Jones Wild West Show failed earlier in the year.

To the best of the author's knowledge there has been no

report of what may have happened to the large carvings on the Coleman show trucks. It seems improbable that none of the property went into the hands of show people in spite of the *Billboard* report.

Virginia the elephant had a infamous and famous future. In 1930 Hall leased her to Garden Bros. Circus. In 1931 she was sold to Russell Bros. and in 1934 she went back to Hall after being exchanged for another bull named Margaret. Virginia was sold to Nellie Orton on Atterbury Bros. Circus where she was worked by Bill Woodcock, Sr. While on Atterbury she killed a small girl at a Minnesota stand. The show was held up for a week and its name was changed to Cook Bros.

In 1935 Virginia was on the Harley Sadler show. She was renamed Burma by this time and was purchased by Woodcock and Spencer Huntley. They had her on Bailey Bros. and Goldmar Bros. later that year. In 1936 Huntley became sole owner of the elephant and put her on the Joe B. Webb Circus, Bailey Bros., Kit Carson and others. During the winter of 1941-1942 he sold her to Mills Bros. Circus where she became famous marching in the Eisenhower inaugural parade in 1953. She was on Mills as late as 1965 when she was reportedly sold to a zoo.

Elbert E. Coleman, always known as E. E., returned, as promised, to the circus business in less than a year when he purchased the M. L. Clark & Sons Circus. Pluto, it seems, had enough of the circus game, at least for a while.

The author wishes to thank Fred Dahlinger Jr. of the Circus World Museum for his huge contribution to this article. Albert Conover for the photos. The data on Virginia's career is from the Chang Reynolds files at Circus World Museum.

SIDE LIGHTS ON THE CIRCUS BUSINESS

PART FIVE

By David W. Watt

January 4, 1913

In the early history of the Barnum show they were exhibiting in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, when a tall, well built, sandy haired young man just out of his teens stepped up to the front door and asked James A. Bailey, the proprietor, if there was any job around the show for a young man that didn't know anything about the business.

Mr. Bailey looked him over and he said, "Young man, there had ought to be room for a man of that kind, for I think the show is well filled up with men that know all about the business, so that one of your kind might be useful."

The young man's name was Byron Rose. Mr. Bailey hired him and he left his hometown that night never to return to make it his residence again.

Byron Rose filled different positions around the show for a time and later the wagon shows were put on rail and he was made master of transportation. [In fact, the Barnum show was always a railer during Bailey's tenure.] He always looked after the remodeling of the show in the winter at Bridgeport, Connecticut, which was the winter quarters of the Barnum show.

In refitting the show in the winter he was called to New York City more or less at this time and there made the acquaintance of the late W. H. MacLoon of this city. They became warm friends and whenever the bills announced the coming of the Barnum show to Janesville, both Byron Rose and Mr. MacLoon would look forward to a good visit over old times.

As soon as Byron Rose would get his trains unloaded in the morning he would find Mr. MacLoon and

spend all his spare time visiting with him. At one time the Barnum show came into Janesville over the St. Paul road in three sections. Tom Croft was agent at this time and Tom was bewildered to know what he would do with so many cars and as to what he would do with them after they were unloaded. As soon as Mr. Rose met him, he said, "Mr. Croft, all we want you to do is to furnish the room, and I'll do the rest. In less than an hour and a half I'll have everything off of the cars and out of the way." All this was done in less than the time and scarcely a loud word spoken.

Byron Rose hired and discharged all his own men, which meant about twenty-five razor backs, which means the men who loaded and unloaded the train and eight or nine porters, one for each sleeping car. Each of the porters had a car to look after which they had to keep clean,

Byron V. Rose, Barnum & Bailey's long-time master of transportation. All illustrations from the Pfening Archives.



look after shining all the shoes of the performers and managers, send out their washings and, in fact, look after everything pertaining to the cleanliness of the sleepers. Mr. Rose inspected all the sleepers every day and if he found anything wrong, he would call the porter and say to him, "Don't let this happen again"; and if it did, there was soon another man in his place.

Byron Rose was seldom seen around the big show as all his interests at stake were at the railroad yards at all times. He stayed with the Barnum show about twenty-five years and in the meantime made a comfortable fortune and later retired to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where he owned a beautiful home.

He always carried a pad of his own complimentary tickets for the use of railroad men who pulled them over the road and the agents that he had to do business with in the different towns. Rose was a gentleman at all times and in his day was considered the best master of transportation that ever was in the business. Mr. Rose died several years ago leaving a widow but no children.

In all the years that I was with the Forepaugh show we always had a Pinkerton detective with the show to keep off pickpockets, sneak thieves, house breakers, etc. During the years I was there, there were four or five different men and although Philadelphia, the winter quarters of the Forepaugh show, was much nearer New York than Chicago, for some reason our detectives were always sent us from the Chicago office.

There was one whom I wish to mention who was there four years in succession. His name was Arthur Wood and he had a wife and two children in Chicago. Wood had been with

the Pinkerton Agency for many years and up to the time he came with the show his work had been largely away from Chicago. He was one of the leaders of the Pinkerton men who tried at different times to capture the James boys and the Younger boys. He had also been across

the water on business for them two or three times and many of these times his work meant day and night.

When Arthur Wood was sent on to the show, he was sent there as kind of a reward for his long and faithful services and as it was an easy job for a detective. With the kind of people he had to deal with, he seldom made an arrest. He contended it was not good to arrest those kind of people; the only thing that would keep them away from the show indefinitely was a lay-off in the hospital, and this is where they were invariably sent when Arthur Wood got through with them.

I have sat up late many a night and listened to Arthur Wood tell of his experience in the business in different parts of the country. One was when he was sent to the far west to look for a man who had committed murder down east several years before. Wood went west, settled down in a little town and hired out to work in a livery stable. They thought the man they were after was in or near this place. It took Wood about four months to locate his man, but when he got him and was ready to take him back east, the entire town was greatly surprised; for the man had been a respected citizen there for several years. But Arthur Wood seldom made a mistake and was sure he had his man before he made a move.

After being with the show four years the Pinkertons got him still an easier job in Chicago where he could be at home. It was his business to go down into the city between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, take in all the principal hotels and cafes and see that there were no old time crooks or even new ones in the city. I seldom went to Chicago without looking up Arthur Wood for he was always one of my best friends and many times we would go to lunch together and visit over old experiences with the circus.



But after all the narrow escapes that Arthur Wood had, for he'd been in more than one hotly contested gunfight and had many scars which he carried to his grave, he was not to be killed with a gun. His work would usually keep him down in the city till anywhere between 12 and 2 o'clock at night and then he would start for his home on the west side.

It was between one and two at night that he was walking along on West Madison Street. Someone who had been unloading coal in a big round hole in the sidewalk had neglected to put on the cover after they had gotten through and Arthur Wood walked into this hole and there met his death. He received injuries from this fall from which he died in a few days. There were but few, if any, of the older men with the Pinkerton Detective Agency that stood as high as Arthur Wood.

Wood and I were talking in the railroad yards at Indianapolis, Indiana, after the show one night when one of the fast trains from the east came in and a man jumped from the platform to the ground on the opposite side from the depot. Wood recognized him in a second and grabbed for him, but the man jumped to one side and shot at Wood and disappeared in the darkness. After it was over Wood said to me, "There is one of the most desperate characters in the country and the Pinkertons have wanted him for a long time. If I ever see him again, I will get him without warning."

A couple of years later I walked into the office of the Myers House and there stood this same man Kelly. He was registered, but not under the name of Kelly. He knew me in a second and beckoned me to one side and he said, "Dave, I'm not here under the name of Kelly. I wish you would not mention my being here." I said to him, "Kelly, I don't think your business and mine will conflict in any

way. You tend to your business and I'll tend to mine."

I was ready to make any compromise that suited him. But the eagle eye of John Hogan had rested on Kelly two or three different times and while Hogan had no idea

who he was or that he was wanted especially anywhere, he made up his mind that he was an undesirable citizen and called at his room one day and said, "I want you to pack up and get out of town."

Kelly knew that he meant it and he said to him, "All right, sir. When can I get a train for Chicago?" Hogan said, "I don't care where the train is going. You get the first one. If you don't leave town immediately I will shut you up long enough to find out your record." Kelly was not long in getting to the depot and leaving town. But the Pinkerton men were always on the look-out for Kelly, and a year or two later one of the men ran across him in Detroit, Michigan and shot him dead. This ended the career of one notorious crook who saw fit at one time to at least settle down in Janesville and look the lay of the land over, and I never heard that anybody knew what his object was in coming to Janesville.

January 11, 1913

On October the 14th, 1873, there pulled into Janesville a circus menagerie looking for a place to winter. The entire paraphernalia was taken onto the fairgrounds while temporary quarters were made for the menagerie and horses and men. The two proprietors of the show and their families found quarters at the House and the Ogden House which was run by Lorenzo Dearborn. The Ogden House was located where the Brockhaus Dye Works and Johnson's grocery store are now.

The next move to be made was to find a place sufficiently warm or that could be made warm for the animals for the winter. They finally took a lease on the old stone building which is now owned by Frank D. Kimball and used as a storehouse and stands in the rear of the city hall. This was soon remodeled into winter quarters for the animals and temporary cages

for the winter were built around the outside of the building. The animals were soon taken from their cages which they had occupied all summer and put into the temporary ones for the winter. There were about one hundred and thirty head of horses and some of these were put out to farmers to care for through the winter and the balance were kept on the fairgrounds.

The show was well worn from its long trip through the summer, being in mud, sunshine, rain and sand for six months, and it certainly bore the imprints of a well worn show. All the cages were soon run up to the Buchholz Carriage Works where the work of repairing them was begun. Not only were they turned out looking as good as new in the spring, but several new ones were built during the winter. All the baggage wagons got a similar overhauling and a storeroom was rented on East Milwaukee Street where the harnesses were taken, and four or five harness makers were soon at work making new harnesses for the coming year as well as repairing the old ones. In the different places where the show made its headquarters they were busy most of the time.

Sallie Marks, lady rider with the Burr Robbins Circus.

Meat had to be purchased for the animals every other day and hundreds of dollars were spent for corn, oats, hay and straw for the horses that were kept at the fairground. While the harness makers made their own harnesses, all the material in the way of leather, etc. was bought of Bassett & Echlin. Taking it altogether there were many thousands of dollars spent in Janesville before the show was in readiness to take the road in the spring.

It was late the next year that Burr Robbins made a deal for what was known as the Doty Farm in Spring Brook which he bought to make per-

manent headquarters for his show, and this enterprise for many years was one well worth having in Janesville. The show for some years closed here in the fall and this meant many hundreds of dollars for the clothing and shoe stores, for practically everything to fit the boys who had been with the show all summer was bought here in Janesville.

For several weeks before the show would take the road in the spring, performers of all kinds were coming on here to practice in the big ring barn which had been built in Spring Brook to the west of the Burr Robbins residence. For several years the Marks, being five in number, would come on here shortly after the first of January and practice till time for the show to take the road. Willie, Minnie and Sallie Marks, all three were riders. Ance VanZandt was a jockey rider, and I never saw a better one. His wife was a trapeze performer and they were always

here several weeks in advance. Many other performers who would come on early all would stop at good hotels, and as they were high salaried people, they were always good money spenders and meant something to the town.

This show continually grew in size and quality as well until along in about 1881 it was put on the railroad and continued to make Janesville its winter quarters up to the time it was sold and went out of business. In all these years every new cage, every new tableau car and baggage wagon that was ever taken out with the Burr Robbins show was built in Janesville by the Buchholz Carriage Works. Take all these expenditures together, it was certainly a paying proposition for Janesville to be the winter quarters of even a show the size of the Burr Robbins'. While Burr Robbins made his money in several different states, there were many years that he spent practically every dollar in

Janesville that went to refit and refurnish the show to another season. Where the old winter quarters of the show were in those days are now factories, many comfortable homes, and interurban roads and street cars, quite a change since the old days of the circus.

In eighteen and ninety-six, [1897] the greatest undertaking that was ever known in show business was carried out by James A. Bailey of the Barnum show, and this was the shipment of the entire show to Europe. Everything belonging to the show was shipped to Europe except the rolling stock. Mr. Bailey had made a contract for the Coliseum building in London where he was to open for an indefinite run during the winter. After the show had got to running well in London, Mr. Bailey and his agents were busy looking over the country, having cars built to suit the roads which later were to carry them into almost every country in Europe. The undertaking was a success in every way and the show toured Europe for five years.

In 1898 my oldest son, Will Watt, made a tour of Europe and one Sunday morning in London he was reading a paper and he saw where the Barnum show was to open in Edinburgh, Scotland, the following Monday. He had met but few if any Americans over there and had begun to long to meet somebody that he knew. While he was not acquainted with anyone with the Barnum show, he knew that I had many friends there and he immediately took the train to Edinburgh to see the show.

He got there early in the morning and much to his surprise the tents were up and located just across from the depot. He immediately walked over onto the lot and the first tent that he came to was the private tent of Mr. and Mrs. Bailey and Mr. and Mrs. McCaddon, and they were just ready for breakfast. Will walked into the tent, spoke to Mr. Bailey and he said, "What would you like young man?" He said, "Well, I've been traveling all night and I don't know anything that I would appreciate any more than some breakfast." Mr. Bailey immediately informed him that this was a private tent and they did not serve meals to outsiders. "Well," he said, "I have been over in



this country quite a while. I'm an American and haven't any too much money and I didn't know but what you would give me my breakfast." Mr. Bailey immediately got interested and said to him, "Young man, what part of America do you come from?" He said, "My home has always been in Janesville, Wisconsin." He said, "Is that so? Did you ever know anyone there by the name of Dave Watt?" Will said, "Yes, I know him very well." Mr. Bailey said, "What is your name?" "Well," he said, "my name happens to be Will Watt and Dave Watt is my father." They were not long in making room for him at the table and Will stayed with the show nearly two weeks. He rode in front of the parade in Edinburgh that morning, helped them around the front door in the afternoon and Mr. Bailey often told him if he would stick to the business he would soon be a showman.

After spending a week with the show he was given a pass on to one of the advance cars which happened to be in charge of a Janesville boy whom he knew very well by the name of Arthur Windish. Here he spent several days, returning to the show where he stayed two or three days longer. When he finally left them to complete his travels in that country, it was with many regrets on both sides, for Will had made many friends around the show, and the nice way in which Mr. and Mr. Bailey entertained him will always remain one of the brightest spots in his life. For weeks after his return home one of his greatest hobbies was to tell me about the nice time that he had with the Barnum show in Europe. But show people to me always seemed a little different from the average person and I think they were. They were like one big family, and if they had been together for years there were ties that were hard to break. Even had a stranger gone to the circus, recommended by an old friend that had been there, he could get more attention and be looked after better than most any other place that I know of,

for they certainly had one hobby and that was to stand "side by each."

January 18, 1913

In eighteen and fifty-one August Ringling, father of the now famous Ringling brothers, was married and with his wife started for Chicago, Illinois, to make a home, and it was here that Al Ringling, the oldest of the brothers, first saw the light of day. After living there in Chicago for about two years Mr. Ringling thought best that they move to Milwaukee.

He was a harness maker by trade and had better inducements offered him to the Cream City. Here the second son, Gus Ringling, was born. After a residence of less than two years in Milwaukee, they moved to Baraboo, and after residing there a few years, they moved to McGregor, Iowa, where August Ringling went into business for himself.

They resided there fourteen years and it was there that most of the family was raised and educated in the public schools. There were nine children in the family, seven boys and two girls. But Baraboo had always seemed like home to the Ringlings and along in about the middle of the seventies, they moved back to Baraboo in which city they have since made their home.

It was about this time that the circus bug commenced to buzz in the head of Al Ringling, the oldest of the boys, and it soon spread to the rest of the family like a case of scarlet fever. It was early in the year of

August Ringling and his family.



'78 or '79 [1882] that they first attempted to put a show on the road which was a small hall attraction, and the Ringling brothers were the principal actors.

In the early part of their hall show's business they were like most of the amateurs in the business; they saw more or less ups and downs, but it was only about three years later, I think, in '81 [1884] that they got a few horses together and half as many wagons and in the spring started out the real circus. But the wagon show unlike the hall show commenced to prosper from the start, and it was only a few years until it was a show of no mean proportions and stood well in favor with the public in all parts of the country where they happened to show.

As soon as the little wagon show would close in the fall the boys would busy themselves repairing and rebuilding the wagons and cages for the coming season, always adding a few new ones, and the father with three or four assistants would rebuild the old harnesses and also add many new ones for the coming spring.

It was in this way that year after year the little wagon show of the Ringling brothers prospered until the fall of '90 [1889] after running into winter quarters at their home in Baraboo where the brothers held a meeting and decided that they were big enough to put the show on rail. Cars were bought for their new venture and along about the last of April they opened up the season with a brand new railroad show of sixteen cars. This for them was quite a venture at the time, but the new show prospered and made more than double the money the first year by rail than they had ever made by wagons.

The cars took them farther from home. They opened up new country, and everywhere that the new railroad show of Ringling brothers pitched their tents they made friends, for their watchword had always been to make good to the public every promise that they

had made on paper. It was only the next year that the show nearly doubled in size and a better and higher class ring performance always follows in the growth of a circus and the addition of animals of all kinds in the menagerie.

It was before this time that the older showmen of the country commenced to watch their movements and could readily see that they would soon have a dangerous rival for supremacy in the field of show business. Adam Forepaugh, for whom I worked for many years, was always a great admirer of the Ringlings and many times I have heard him say, "Those boys will be great men in the business some day." This was at the time when they were on wagons and in a small way.

At one time they were showing in Titusville, Pennsylvania. They got in there Sunday morning and were to show Monday, and the Forepaugh show got into the Oil City at the same time. As the two towns were only eighteen miles apart, Adam Forepaugh, Jr. and myself with two other friends drove across the country Sunday to take a look at the Ringling show. Their lot in Titusville was located on a bank of the river, which gave them ample opportunity to wash all the wagons and cages. As I had notified them a few days before that they would have visitors there on Sunday, everything was in the finest shape possible to entertain callers. On our ride back to Oil City that evening young Forepaugh said to me, "There is the finest and best managed show for the size of it that I ever saw."

The Ringling brothers ran their show clean. There were no petty thievery or short change artists allowed around the circus when it was small, and when it grew to such proportions that they were unable to look after that part of it themselves, they employed a Pinkerton man who well knew how to look after that part of the show.

About six years ago I went to Madison to see the circus. They had showed the day before in Milwaukee, and on account of the long haul from the lot in Milwaukee to the railroad yards there and the long haul from the Madison yards to the lot in Madison, it made the show late in

getting out to parade.

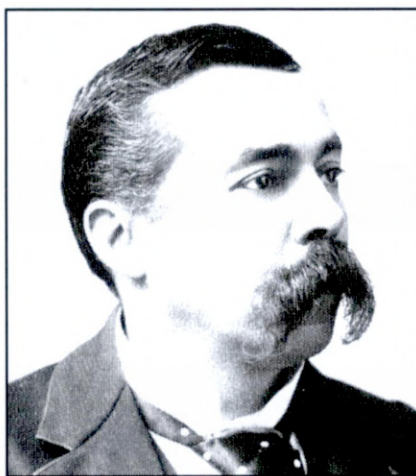
I walked onto the lot about 10 o'clock and everybody was hustling, doing all they could to get the parade started. The carriage was in front that led the parade and Al Ringling said to me, "Dave, you know Madison as well as anybody. Jump in that carriage and start the parade. We'll put the wagons in line as fast as we can. Don't stop. Keep everything going."

At that time most of the Ringling boys made their homes in Baraboo and while August Ringling, the father, had died in '98, the mother was still living and was in Madison at the show that day. They all had a family dinner together in the cook tent at which I was an invited guest and was given the seat of honor next to Mother Ringling.

Mrs. Ringling wore a smile of satisfaction that day when she was talking over matters at home in Baraboo. The sons were asking after the neighbors and at the dinner table, there was little or nothing mentioned about the show. Everything that day seemed to please Mother Ringling. And why not? She had lived to see the life's ambitions of her sons realized, that of owning and managing the greatest show in the world, and it was certainly realized that day in Madison.

It is certain to say that the cheery advice and bright smiles of the mother had much to do to smooth the pathway of the boys in their career in the business. Both the afternoon and night houses were packed to the ring bank, and this was the best

Albert Ringling, oldest of the Ringling brothers.



evidence in the world of the confidence that the people had in the Ringling show.

This was the last visit that I ever had with Mrs. Ringling, for she died at her home in Baraboo the following January and was buried in the family lot in the cemetery there where the father and two of the boys and one sister are also buried. The one sister living, Mrs. Harry North, resides in Baraboo, but the brothers are all scattered now, their interests in the show business calling them to different parts of the country.

Al Ringling, the oldest, lives in a beautiful home in Baraboo. Henry, the youngest of the boys, makes his home in Wilmette, a suburb of Chicago. Charles Ringling and his family reside in New Rochelle, New York near the winter quarters of the great Barnum show. He also owns a beautiful winter home in Sarasota, Florida. John Ringling for the most part makes his home in New York City and White Sulphur Springs, Montana, where he owns a fine ranch and is president of a railroad running from a nearby town.

But it was earlier in their careers when the Ringlings were young in the business that the owners of the powerful shows of former years commenced to pass away and the Ringlings began to reach out for control of those powerful shows. The first of these was the W. W. Cole show which Mr. Cole sold to the Barnum show and took as part payment an interest in the Barnum show where he was given the management of the show for some years. Later Mr. Cole sold out his interest and retired from the business and is still living in New York City. Then came the death of Adam Forepaugh and that show passed into the hands of the Barnum people—James A. Bailey and James E. Cooper. Then came the deaths of the Sells brothers whose homes and winter quarters were in Columbus, Ohio. That show was sold at auction in the winter and the Ringlings and James A. Bailey were the buyers. Later they bought the Forepaugh show of Mr. Bailey which gave them control of all the larger shows except the Barnum show and that they soon took over after the death of James A. Bailey, so that now they owned and controlled all those once famous shows and they

finally divided them up as two enormous institutions, the Ringling and the Barnum shows.

The Ringling show which is wintered at Baraboo will open the season about the first week in April, and the Barnum show at Bridgeport, Conn., will open at Madison Square Garden in New York about the first week in March, the exact dates not being settled as yet.

I spent last Tuesday in Baraboo with Al Ringling where he gave me the outlines of the great Ringling show for the coming season. This show will take the road with about ninety cars, all being sixty feet or over in length, with seventeen or eighteen sleepers. These cars will run in four sections and carry nearly, if not quite, 1,400 people. The beautiful production of Joan of Arc which they gave last summer, will be one of the features this year, but put on in a much grander scale. There will be 800 people in this production and there will be three shifts of scenery in the play. The finest scenic artists in the country are now at work on the scenery. A German professor is busy working on the music which will be used in this production, and the wardrobe alone for these 800 people will cost something of a fortune running into many thousands of dollars.

After he had given me a brief outline of where the show was to be this year, the only wonder to me was how could it make money enough to even pay the expenses. It would not be possible for any other circus and menagerie in the world to take money enough to pay expenses.

If any show managers the world over have hewed close to the line of the golden rule, the Ringling brothers certainly have and any success that may come to them will be certainly well deserved.

After the close of the engagement in Chicago the Ringling show will start east and the Barnum show at the close of their engagement in Madison Square Garden will start directly for the west. Mr. Al Ringling assured me that one or the other of the great shows would certainly visit Janesville this year. May they prosper to the end of their life's work.

January 25, 1913

In this week's circus talk of people



John "Pogey" O'Brien, the notorious showman and friend of Adam Forepaugh.

that I knew in the business many years ago I will tell you something about a man who ran the greatest show in the world in his day and his name to the public the world over was "Pogey" O'Brien, but his legal document name when signing papers was John O'Brien. When spoken of around the show or even in a business way it was always "Pogey."

In his day they were all wagon shows and he had been successful in the business for some years and finally launched out one spring of the sixties with fifty-two cages of animals. It took over three hundred head of horses to transport the show over the road and in those days it was different from now; for then the man with the big menagerie had the big show, the ring performance being a small part of the show and not supposed to be much of a drawing card. All of the billboards and in the newspapers the big streamers would announce the coming of the largest menagerie in the world, "Pogey" O'Brien's show with fifty-two cages of animals.

This show traveled mostly through the eastern country and seldom, if ever, got very far into the west. Besides his fifty-two cages of animals he had an elephant and two camels and it was with this show that the late Spencer Alexander, better known as Delavan in this part of the country, first made his debut as a

boss hostler. It was Delavan's business to look after the management of all the horses and in getting the show over the road from town to town. It was here with "Pogey" that Delavan made his great reputation as a boss hostler.

In those days the towns were far apart and the roads as a rule were bad, and it was with much difficulty that they made many of the towns. On nearly every drive Delavan would be up all night, always in the rear of the show watching carefully that nothing was left behind.

The show prospered for some years and "Pogey" O'Brien became famous in the business in those days, but it was said of him that he knew little or nothing about the Ten Commandments. While his great menagerie was a feature, he was running the ring performance so cheap that it was unsatisfactory to the public.

Years ago an old gentleman from the rural district visited the show one afternoon, and after the show was over as he was passing out of the main entrance, he spied "Pogey" sitting in an arm chair and spoke and asked if this wasn't Mr. O'Brien. When Mr. O'Brien said that it was, the old gentleman said, "I want to congratulate you, Mr. O'Brien, on having the poorest ring performance that I ever saw."

The ruralite was just finishing the last of a brick of popcorn and Mr. O'Brien took a look at him and he said, "I think the trouble with you was that you had no more than got seated in the show till you bought a brick of popcorn and between your busying yourself and sitting there watching it fade away, you probably lost the best act in the show."

"Well," the old gentleman said, "That might be so. There's one thing certain; if there were any good acts in the show, I missed them."

The show wintered near Philadelphia and many a time after the "Pogey" O'Brien show commenced to go down and lose money, Adam Forepaugh came to the front and helped the old gentleman out. In 1892 [actually, earlier] we opened the Forepaugh show in Philadelphia on a Monday and it was always with American performers whose contracts were written with two weeks' notice. That was in the case their acts

were not satisfactory Mr. Forepaugh could give them two week's notice for them to look for another place. There were four acts that spring in the show that Mr. Forepaugh did not take kindly to and at the opening Monday afternoon Mr. Forepaugh handed all four of these acts their two weeks notices.

"Pogey" O'Brien was open in Washington City for three days which meant Thursday, Friday and Saturday of the same week, but when he got everything in readiness over at Washington the Saturday before, he found that he did not have half enough performers to give a two-hour show. So he came over to Philadelphia to ask his old friend Adam Forepaugh to help him out.

He arrived that Monday afternoon and came into the ticket wagon very much excited and told Mr. Forepaugh his troubles. Adam immediately told him he would try and help him out. He sent for the four troupes of people which he had given the two weeks notice, brought them out to the ticket wagon, introduced them to "Pogey," and they were soon signed for his show for the season, and all left immediately.

But O'Brien had not money enough to rebuild and brighten up his show for the coming season, and from that time on "Pogey" O'Brien's show kept dwindling away, and it was something like a year or two later that he had to disband. Only but for the help of Adam Forepaugh at different times it would have gone on the rocks long before it did. The show was sold out piecemeal, being bought by other prosperous showmen.

In the season of 1884 there were with the Adam Forepaugh show perhaps at least fifty percent of the performers from across the water. Along toward the middle of the season practically all the performers with the show thought they had a grievance, either real or fancied, and they voted to form in line and march out to the front door between the afternoon and the night performance and tell Mr. Forepaugh what they wanted and must have, or they would quit.

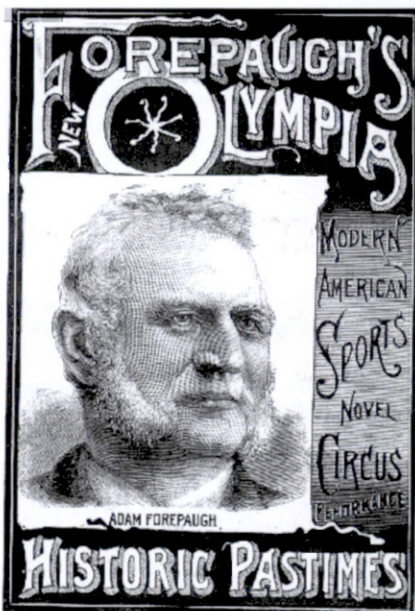
They formed in line and one was made spokesman. They had written down on a piece of paper what they wanted and that they would take

their time and quit if their demands were not complied with. Mr. Forepaugh took the paper and read it over and told them that he had always been in the habit of running his own show to suit himself and he was still going to do it.

The spokesman then told him that they were ready to quit. Mr. Forepaugh pulled a little book out of his pocket, gave the spokesman his time and told him to go to the wagon and get his money. After five or six of them had taken their time the balance of them found their way back into the dressing room. They had found that no bluffing went with Adam Forepaugh. He then went back to the dressing room and informed them that any time any or all of them wanted to quit, they would always find money enough in the ticket wagon to pay them off and that as long as he could have his Addie, the band and the elephants, he could always give a show.

This was the last time that anyone around the Forepaugh show ever undertook to dictate to the old gentleman how the show should be run. Mr. Forepaugh was not a hard man to work for, but he was a hard man to tell what he must do, and in all his career in show business, he never had a partner or anyone to dictate to him what he should do or how he should spend his money for the good

Front cover of an 1887 Forepaugh courier.



of the son, Adam, Jr., was in this way that he built up one of the largest shows in the world and at the time of his death left millions to his young widow and his only son, Adam Jr.

February 1, 1913

After many years of bitter warfare between the Barnum and Forepaugh shows, in eighteen hundred and eighty-four a contract was signed for ten years between the great shows for a division of the country. This meant the Forepaugh show to take the eastern, northern and southern country one year and the Barnum show to take the far west and vice versa each year.

In eighteen hundred and eighty-seven, after the Forepaugh show had opened at Philadelphia for two weeks, they took the road to do the eastern country. Some weeks later in the season we were billed to show in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on a Monday, which meant that we would arrive there on Sunday morning. On Saturday, the day before, a small show, whose name I have forgotten, exhibited in Johnstown, a town of something like 25,000 or possibly more inhabitants, a large percentage of which were working men in the rolling mills and other iron industries in the town.

A strike of some magnitude had been going on there for some time, and when this [other] show undertook to show there on Saturday, the guy ropes that held the main tents were cut; the rioters went under the canvas, fought their way into the tents and finally got into a general fight with the employees. Before they could be quieted, two men belonging to the circus were killed.

They were not long in getting off the grounds and out of town. They said the show had only been gone two hours when our trains pulled in there Sunday morning. The mayor and chief of police were at the depot to meet Mr. Forepaugh and begged of him not to unload the show as the rioters had the best of them and they could not protect him. But Mr. Forepaugh insisted that he must show there, that his expense to make the town would practically be the same whether he showed or not and that in all his experience in show business, he had never billed a town

in which he did not show if it was possible to get there. After much planning and talking with the mayor and chief of police, Mr. Forepaugh said to them, "Although the license I pay your city is large and should give me protection, rather than to not show here if you will give me the privilege of protecting myself, I will unload the show."

This they rapidly did and said, "You may resort to any means to protect your people and property, but we will not guarantee any protection or charge any license."

The show immediately unloaded and everything was taken onto the ground and as usual the menagerie and animal tents were put up, but on account of possible storms the big top, which means the seating capacity of the show, was not put up until Monday morning.

Dan Taylor, the boss canvasman, with his assistants soon got the menagerie top ready to raise, but the rioters had gathered in numbers and walked out onto the canvas and stood there. Mr. Taylor never found any fault till time to raise his canvas. He then said to them, "Gentlemen, you will please walk off the canvas as we wish to raise the top." They told him they would get off when they got ready, and there was nothing left for him to do but to see that they moved in a hurry.

He sent men with stakes with iron bands on them, and in a few minutes they were hauling the rioters in every direction for their homes and the hospitals. They were driven off of the grounds and guards were put out to see that they did not return. The fight had been so fast and furious that they did not care to return and it was hard for them to organize a band large enough to do us any harm. The word soon spread in the town and the best people were in sympathy with the show, but guards had to be put on the grounds all night with arms ready to protect the show property.

The next afternoon the show opened with a line of guards well out from the canvas, and everybody was compelled to come in single file to the show. We got through the next day, gave two shows to crowds and the Adam Forepaugh show left the town with a good name as far as the better

element of the city was concerned.

This was the only time that I ever saw when I was in the business where we had to put out men to guard the property all night, and this was undoubtedly due to the condition of the strikers and rioters at the time we showed there.

The following year we came west, but the next year Johnstown was on our list which was in 1889. Several weeks before we were to show here a terrible rain storm came which covered a considerable amount of that country, and it was said that more water fell in six hours than ever was known before. Johnstown lay in a valley between two mountains and on one side was the Susquehanna River, and for some miles above the town in the valley were large dams used as water power. The terrible rains had raised them to such an extent that they gave way before many of the people were warned and the awful flood struck them. It was never known, but it was said that anywhere from five to ten thousand people met their death. This flood came on the last day of May, eighteen hundred and eighty nine, which was on a Saturday and the news which could be had from the flooded city was very meager for some time.

We were showing far up in the state, and on account of the trouble that we had two years before, when the news came to us Mr. Forepaugh said that there was certainly many a one in Johnstown that needed drowning. But when the extent of the terrible accident was known, Mr. Forepaugh was one of the first to send them money for relief, and it was on our route he made up his mind to show there just as he had billed to and gave a certain portion of the receipts to the relief fund.

This he did. When the doors opened in the afternoon, bankers, merchants and businessmen of the town had entire charge of the show. I was the only one around the front of the show that had to work that afternoon. I had to sell tickets but the businessmen of Johnstown took the tickets at the main entrance and the cash. At Mr. Forepaugh's request, all

widows and orphans were passed in free.

We did a big business both afternoon and night as in the country for miles around had been advertised that a certain portion of the receipts would go to the relief fund. Railroads excused people in for many miles around, a great many of them having two objects in view--one of seeing the show and the other to take a look at the once prosperous town practically in ruins.

The entire town was in mourning and many children attended the show who had lost both father and mother and, in many cases, friends and neighbors had taken temporary charge of them. Adam Forepaugh gladdened the heart of many a little orphan that day as he quietly placed a silver dollar in their tiny hands, a kindness that they never would forget. One very old lady had four small children in charge. The father and mother, she said, took them to safety upon the mountainside and went back to try and save something from the home and were both caught in the floods.

Our lot was located on a flat just above which was the railroad bridge which crossed the river at that point, and where it was said, from eight hundred to one thousand people gathered as a last resort only to be swept away in the flood. There were many people at the show that day that had changed their minds about Adam Forepaugh who two years before had put up such a bitter fight to protect his property and who came to see the same men back there and giving a portion of the receipts and also a check that he had sent them some weeks before for the relief of the town. There were hundreds of them gathered at the main entrance and insisted on seeing Adam Forepaugh and wishing him the best the world had in store for him.

This was the last time I was ever in Johnstown. In the conditions which existed in the two years that we showed there, there was certainly a vast difference. The damage done to the city at that time was many millions of dollars, but the city has



been rebuilt larger and finer than ever, and no one seems to entertain any fear that there will ever be a repetition of the awful flood again.

We certainly never cared to visit any town again under the conditions that we did in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, either in eighteen hundred and eighty-seven or eighteen hundred and eighty-nine, for when I look back at the two dramas enacted in the two years, one full of fight and defiance of the law, and the other all humiliation and mourning, the difference was certainly great. It's incidents like this and many others that go to make up the gypsy life of one in the show business.

February 8, 1913

This week I am going just a little outside of my province perhaps, but I want to write something about the plan to establish a showmen's club in Chicago. There are hundreds, yes thousands, of former circus men throughout the country to whose nostrils the smell of the old time sawdust arena each spring is like a breath of heaven. Once under the white tops and you always feel the glamour of the profession. The members of a circus are like one big family and the plan to have a club house for them in Chicago, the present center for such a movement, appears to be most feasible. Warren Patrick who, by the way, is a Janesville product, now Chicago correspondent of the New York *Clipper*, writes of the plan as follows: "You men of the outdoor amusement field, have you ever stopped to realize that your branch of the business is the only one without an organization, without a club?"

The theatrical press agents and managers have Friars' Club; the actor, the Lambs' Club; the vaudevillians, the Comedy and White Rats' clubs; the magician affiliates himself with the Magic Club, and the moving picture fraternity with the Screen Club. Why not a Showmen's Club (by whatever name it may be known) for the vast following identified with tented entertainment?

It really seems to me that the men of the "lot" should form an organiza-



tion, one that would afford them an opportunity of getting closer together and so conducted that it would be esteemed an honor to be counted one of its members.

Once the organization is formed, steps could be taken to raise funds by subscription, life memberships, initiation fees, dues and benefits towards the leasing or the building of a clubhouse. I venture to say that scarcely a single tented organization would hesitate to set aside a portion, at least, of one day's receipts towards this fund, and I am positive that arrangements can be effected for the giving of a monster benefit in Chicago for that purpose. This benefit might be in the nature of a "Carnival of all Nations," on the lot, a combination circus, wild west and carnival attractions in one big assembly.

The benefits of a permanent clubhouse in Chicago are obvious. It could be made a winter home in the true sense of the word for many returning from their summer season's work. In proper hands its influence would be towards the uplift of the profession to which it is devoted. It could be made so that its insignia worn upon the lapel of a member's coat would be looked upon as a badge of honor, the membership, of course, being limited to representative showmen of proper character. Chicago is the radiating center of the tent show business of America, and I will not be at all surprised if this movement goes forward with a decided impetus. The officials and board of directors of the Showmen's Club should be made up of men of the highest standing and I apprehend there would be no

difficulty in getting the "big" men to serve.

Given a club with a gymnasium, swimming pool, pool and billiard rooms, a buffet, reading and writing rooms, suites and bedrooms and a kitchenette for light lunch service, the tent showman who comes to Chicago will feel that he is a regular member in the large world of clubdom.

I also found some interesting items gathered by Joe Hepp (Frank Lemon) in a recent issue of the

Clipper which apply to the old showman's idea of affairs that I am taking space to reprint diem. They are published under the caption "Are You Aware?" [And the reader should be aware that some of the following statements are incorrect.]

That W. W. Cole was the first proprietor to introduce the wild west with a circus featuring Dr. Carver.

That the Cooper & Bailey show was the first American circus to visit Australia.

That the Barnum & Bailey Circus presented the greatest animal feature ever exhibited, Jumbo.

That the Montgomery Queen circus was the first to visit California.

That Buckley's Hippodrome featured with the Great Eastern Circus was the largest ever presented under canvas.

That the Thayer Noyes & Van Amburgh Circus was considered a large show in 1863, traveling by wagon and using only one tent for the circus and menagerie.

That Adam Forepaugh had the largest and finest equipped wagon show prior to going on rails. Fourteen horses were required to haul the "hip" den overland.

That the W. H. Harris Nickel Plate Circus was the first to invade Prince Edward Islands and still holds the record of making the longest railroad jump from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to Winnipeg, Manitoba over the Canadian Pacific Railway. C. C. Wilson of the Ringling Bros. show can verify this.

That the Cooper & Bailey Circus was the first to exhibit electric light as a feature in 1879, having an exclusive circus contract for this privilege.

Later, during the same season W. W. Cole also featured "electric light." It took some clever scheming as there was but one electric company (Brush Light Co., Cleveland, Ohio.) in the country. (Electricity had not as yet been utilized as an illuminant.) There was an extra admission charged to see the light.

That Adam Forepaugh introduced the first cookhouse with his circus in 1871. Prior to that time all people with the show, including the workingmen, were taken care of at hotels and boarding houses. Nowadays circus performers and managers occasionally go to hotels on Sundays.

That the first "extra 10 cent" tickets were sold by S. O. Wheeler with the Adam Forepaugh show in 1872, allowing the show five cents for every ticket sold. Many years later with the same circus, James Jordan sold the extra ten cent tickets and received one cent a ticket for his services.

That the Barnum & Bailey and Adam Forepaugh shows combined played at Madison Square Garden, New York City, for a spring engagement. Some show.

That the Ringling Bros. Circus in the earliest days was transported overland on three wagons. Now it requires eighty-six cars. That's what we call "progressive" showmanship.

That the original Yankee Robinson circus was the first and only show to travel by canal.

That it required ninety-three sixty foot cars to transport the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth in 1903, following its five year tour in Europe. Hardly probable any show will utilize that number of cars again.

That Adam Forepaugh at the time paid the highest salary for a circus feature when he engaged Helen [Louise] Montague, The "\$10,000 Beauty."

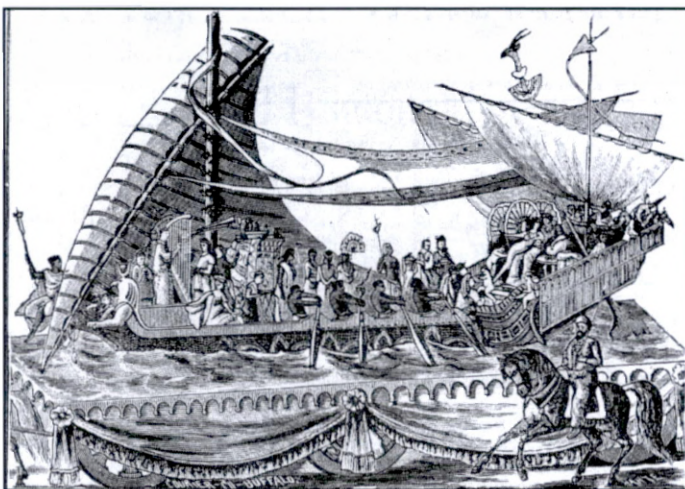
That W. W. Cole was the first circus proprietor to use special lithographic paper in advertising his show and never displayed his own likeness on the billboards.

That the Spalding & Rogers circus

was the first to introduce a twenty-four horse band team.

That the first forty horse team was introduced with the Barnum & Bailey show to pull the big show band wagon.

That Adam Forepaugh was the first circus man to use two tents—one for the circus and the other for the



Cleopatra's Barge as pictured in an 1887 Forepaugh courier.

menagerie. Previous to that all shows used but one tent for their entire exhibition.

That the B. E. Wallace show had the most disastrous circus railroad wreck on record (considering the number of human lives lost) at Durand, Michigan, on the Grand Trunk Railroad in 1903.

That the Walter L. Main wreck on the Pennsylvania near Altoona, Pa. was the second most disastrous in the history of the circus business.

That the Buffalo Bill Wild West is the only American tent show which has ever visited Italy. The entire company was admitted to the Vatican and honored by an audience with the Pope.

That the Barnum & Bailey circus has visited England twice.

That the W. W. Cole show made a prosperous trip to Australia in the '80s and returned to the United States in time for a summer tour.

That the Australian tour of the Sells Bros. show was disastrous on account of distemper attacking the horses. Upon the show's arrival at Sydney, N.S.W., the government ordered all the circus horses shot.

This crippled the show which never received a dollar in compensation.

That the Barnum & Bailey show in 1903 carried three twenty-four hour men, five hundred and fifty head of horses, four boss canvasmen for the two large tops, and it cost \$50,000 a week to run the show. One thousand three hundred and thirty-nine individuals were on the payroll back with the circus, and ninety-two were employed with the cook tent.

That Robert Stickney in the early '80s was considered the most accomplished all around circus performer in the business—rider, leaper and general athlete.

That Col. Geo. W. Hall ("Popcorn George") in the early '80s chartered a schooner at Jacksonville, Florida, which sailed for the West Indies with his

circus, making nearly all of the Windward Islands. George W. De Haven was in charge of the show until it reached Trinidad when Col. Hall joined the aggregation.

That John Hennessy and Geo. W. De Haven took the first American circus to Mexico, crossing the Rio Grande at Laredo. Howe's London Circus (French & Monroe) in 1887 was the next American show to tour Mexico, covering the same route, traveling by rail.

That P. T. Barnum & Co.'s Circus in 1873 gave three performances each day during the season with the exception of three days of two performances each. The doors opened at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. A parade was given each day. This was never attempted before and has not been since. An amphitheatre was built on each lot a few days in advance which was covered with canvas upon arrival of the show. Charles McLean, now with the Two Bills' show, was boss canvasman of the Barnum show in 1873.

That the Adam Forepaugh show was the last to exhibit on the lake-front (1893) in Chicago.

That the Adam Forepaugh circus was the first to exhibit in Chicago after the big fire, coming the next year, 1872, with his big wagon show.

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING

NO GAMBLING DEVICES TOLERATED

VOL. V, CHAPTER 6, PART TWO

By Orin Copple King

1898

The Valley Falls *New Era*, July 30, 1898, reported the presence of Advertising Car No. 1 of the John F. Hummel Colossal Shows and promised that Car No. 2 would arrive on August 3. There is no further mention of Car No. 2 and it was probably non-existent. The town, however, was adequately billed for the exhibitions of August 9.

An ad in the *New Era* was headed by the claim "A Show of Quality—One of Merit."

The ad continued; "Valley Falls August 9, 1898.

"THE JOHN F. HUMMEL Colossal Shows and The American Racing Association. John F. Hummel, Lessee [Cut of equestrienne standing by horse]

"Finest, Brightest, Up-to-Date Exhibitions Circus, Menagerie, Museum and Hippodrome.

"Positively and Emphatically the only all Feature show For the Season of 1898.

"GRAND FREE STREET PARADE At 10 O'clock, A. M.

"Wonderful Outside Free Exhibitions Daily on the Show Grounds.

"Two Performances Daily, at 2 and 8 o'clock p. m.

"POSITIVE TO APPEAR ON DAY AND DATE ANNOUNCED Tuesday, August 9th

"Cheap Excursions on all Railroads.

"One of the interesting features of the parade and which was not on the programme," according to the *New Era* "was the fight between the pair of Shetland pony stallions, the leaders of a four-in-hand, which took place on lower Broadway. The combat waged in earnest and forty men and boys were required to part the little equines. They were finally quieted and sent to their stalls in disgrace."

"The show has come and gone,"

the *New Era* reported. "The parade was good, but they could not show us much in the 'big tent' that was very creditable. The pony act was a war feature, but for one American pony to slay three Spanish ponies was an extreme without humor or pathos."

The *New Era* had much to say about the show: "The show advertised for 'gentlemen only' was not very well patronized by the--ladies.

"Some of our male citizens will probably conclude hereafter that a circus is not a proper place for a lady. Many of the men missed part of the show by having the women folks with them. 'For men only.'

"The man who goes up against a

This Hummel ad appeared in the *Girard Press* on August 4, 1898. Kansas State Historical Society.

shell game cannot be blamed for buying lightning rods by the foot.

"We still have a few men with us who know they know under what particular shell the pellet lies.

"Where is wisdom to be found?"

"Try the shell game. If you don't come away a wiser man we have missed our guess.

"Even a Christian young man it seems can be deceived. These 'shell game' manipulators are deceiving the very elect, as it were.

"The 'fireman' on the calliope in the circus parade Tuesday, after making the circuit of the town, looked like a black face comedian at the end of a performance on a hot night. It would have been a hard matter to determine whether he was white or black. He certainly earned the price of admission."

The *Girard Press* carried the following handout on August 4, heralding the exhibitions of August 16: "Three big shows coming to Girard August 16th. Thomas R. Perry, manager Advance Car No. 1, with a corps of bill posters arrived last night with paper to put out for the coming date of the show. This aggregation comes to Girard August 16th.

"The press speaks as follows: The *Detroit Evening News*: 'About six thousand people visited The John F. Hummel Colossal Shows last night and were well entertained. The circus is given in three rings with a big display of important novelties, and the stretch of canvas is entirely occupied with a net work of rigging and apparatus used in the aerial performances.

"The magnificent parade created much favorable comment upon all sides. The solid, elaborate and gorgeously decorated vehicles and the splendid appearance of the stock was especially admired by many thousands who crowded the

"A SHOW OF QUALITY---ONE OF MERIT."
Girard, Tuesday, August 16th.
THE JOHN F. HUMMEL
COLOSSAL SHOWS
and the American Racing Association.
JOHN F. HUMMEL, Lessee.

**THE GREATEST LEAP
EVER MADE BY MORIAL MAN**
GRAND FREE EXHIBITION, DAILY, 11 A.M.



Finest, Brightest, Up-to-Date Exhibitions.
CIRCUS, MENAGERIE, MUSEUM, AND HIPPODROME.
Positively and Emphatically the Only All Feature Show
for the Season of 1898.

Modest in its promises, lavish in its performances, always honest in its announcements, it is the very acme of perfection, presenting at all times twice as much as it has advertised, and producing performances never before seen, and which cannot be duplicated by any other show, no matter how great or small.

2---Great Circus Companies---2
Grand Free Street Parade at 10 o'clock a. m.
WONDERFUL OUTSIDE FREE EXHIBITIONS DAILY ON THE SHOW GROUNDS.
Two Performances Daily, at 2 and 8 p. m. Doors open an hour earlier.
Positive to appear on Day and Date announced.
Girard, Tuesday, August 16th.
Cheap Excursions on all railroads.

sidewalks and even packed the roadways.

"The performance this afternoon drew out many thousands to the exhibition who are being very much entertained by the splendid three ring program that is being rendered."

The *Press* had another handout on the 11th repeating the silly story of the elephant that drank all the water in the locomotive's tender. Near the end of the handout the press agent became more realistic.

"The list of equestrians is headed by the famous Orrin Hollis, who is claimed to be the greatest living bareback rider today in the world, and also includes 'The Belmonts,' 'The Walton Troupe of Acrobats,' 'The Harbeck Family,' 'The famous Reed Sisters,' and Miss Louisa Stowe, all of who stand foremost in the ranks of equestrians and equestriennes."

The shell game was rampant wherever Hummel's show appeared, but at Girard the result was not what the fakirs wanted.

"Considerable excitement prevailed at the circus grounds Tuesday night when it was discovered the show had been attached, and that those on the outside of the tent who had purchased tickets could not get inside, and those inside who had entered before I. N. Skinner and H. F. Ådsit, together with several others, had assume the duties of door-keepers, had no show performance to look upon. The trouble grew out of a shell game which had taken place earlier in the day, and had been the cause of several of our citizens being fleeced. The game netted the show quite a stake, and a great many people cut their eyeteeth by losing a \$10 bill just by way of experience.

"James Daxon of Grant township, Charles Jackson, of this city, and Dave Groomer, of Walnut, are three who lost money. Jackson did not lose his on the game, but was confided out of it.

"Many others deposited their coin with the grafters, and it is thought that they must have fleeced their victims out of about a thousand dollars, as reports show that the suckers were numerous and played their money just as though they had a wagon box full.

"On complaint of Daxon, who had lost \$110, a warrant was sworn out for the shell grafters, but the officers, of course, could not find them, as they had gone hence. B. S. Galtskill, attorney for Daxon, then attached the show, and in the evening shortly after the main show opened the officers closed the doors. After considerable wrangling and attempted bluffs, and a delay of three-quarters of an hour, the show people paid the claim demanded, \$110 and costs. The costs amounted to 18.60.

"Immediately after the claim was paid the doors opened, the 'spielers' set up their 'buy your tickets at the green wagon,' and things went on as though nothing had happened.

"The circus carries a gang of grafters, short changers, etc., who ply their trade with a vim. It is well for neighboring towns to be on their guard."

In spite of the shell game the Girard *Press* reported that, "The performance given by the John Hummel Show Tuesday was fair, and parts of it were as good as average. The elephants and ponies were well trained, and the trapeze performance was good. The show went from here to Cherryvale."

Orrin Hollis, featured rider of the Hummel show in 1898. Pfening Archives.



The losers at the shell game were not the only ones who had reason to remember the show.

"Tuesday afternoon Ed Cuthbertson, of Crawford township, had his horse and buggy stolen. He and his wife drove to Girard to attend the show, and tied their horse near the Christian church. When Mr. Cuthbertson returned to get his rig he found it missing, and could not locate it or find any trace of it. He informed the officers, and cards were sent out to the officers of neighboring towns. Up to this writing [August 18] nothing has been heard of the missing property."

An advertisement in the *Cherryvale Republican* for Hummel's exhibitions on August 17 mentioned one of the rarest of all animals, a "Monster Living Double-Horned Unicorn," which is even more rare than a two-horned rhino.

The day before the performance at Howard on August 19, the *Elk County Citizen* published a handout which, in part, detailed the daily needs of the circus.

"Two hundred horses are carried with the show. They include every kind under the sun from the roly-poly little Shetlands to the pink-nosed racers and heavy Norman and Percheron draft animals. Four tents shelter them and a small army of men look after them. Three tons of hay, one hundred bushels of oats and two tons of straw are used daily. A blacksmith shop is always stationed near the stables, and a harnessmaker works in a big wagon as much at ease as if on firmer ground. To accommodate everybody, a barber also travels with the circus. To carry these 200 people and 200 horses, besides the whole menagerie and all the apparatus, requires a train of 20 cars. The circus has its own train. All the railroad furnishes is the locomotive and the track. The cars are all over 60 feet in length and one containing the elephants is 80 feet long, the largest car in the world."

The above should be noted with suspicion as Hummel was a dedicated liar and there is no independent confirmation.

The *Citizen*, after the show had come and gone, had nothing good to report.

"The greatest fake in the show line that ever entered this part was the John F. Hummel aggregation of gamblers, swindlers and has-been showmen. Not a feature of the show was worthy. About 1,000 people witnessed the day performance and about 100 at night. All kinds of thieves and swindlers were with the outfit, but our officers had received a tip in advance, had employed extra marshals and sheriffs to watch them closely, and only a few of our citizens were swindled. The entire outfit should be driven out of the state. They are wholly unworthy of the patronage of the public."

The most sensational news of the Kansas tour occurred in Yates Center on show day August 22.

According to the Yates Center News, "Circus Notes.

"The show drew a big crowd. The parade was fairly good and so was the performance. The gamblers were in evidence as a number of people can testify. It is too bad that men will bite at such games, but they always have and probably always will.

"Monday morning it was reported that one of the men connected with the Hummel circus had been shot and that he died that morning. A diligent search and investigation by our officers was instituted but all the circus followers evidently had received strict orders to forever forget that such a thing had happened, and it was impossible to obtain any definite information. A number of persons report having seen a body laid out in one of the cars. The circus physician purchased medicine at one of the drug stores and he evidently had use for it. The murder, if such a thing was committed, was kept a profound secret. Will Pruitt, one of the special police, says he heard two of the showmen quarreling Sunday about the treatment of one of the elephants, and that one had fiercely exclaimed that he would kill the other if he didn't mind his own business. Will says that never saw that man again on the grounds and that

he had kept on the lookout for him.

"During the afternoon performance one of the female riders was thrown from her horse and her collar bone broken. Dr. Kellenberger was called to attend her.

"The fakirs were present; so were the victims.

"It always takes two men to gamble at any game—even a shell game.

"The short change racket helped quite a number to spend their money.

"A number of the 'bloods' took in the Persian dance. Some of the boys say they have seen the same thing before.

"The elephants did not tread on anybody's toes, although there were quite a number present with corns on their foundations (sic).

"Give Me Your Little Brown Hand," said a Neosho Falls boy as he paraded the show grounds with his best girl last Monday. The kodak fiend took them in and named the picture 'Holding Hands.'"

The Advocate, fifteen miles down the road in Buffalo, Kansas, had a more informative account of circus

The Courier Company printed this Wallace litho for the 1898 season. Library of Congress.

day in Yates Center. The event of the John F. Hummel (sic) in Yates Center Monday created considerable excitement for that town. Sunday night while unloading the cars of the circus a quarrel arose between two of the showmen in which one of them shot the other, killing him instantly, and while the show was in progress Monday afternoon a lady horseback rider was thrown from her horse against one of the center poles and fatally injured, her shoulder and chest being crushed. The show was a large one, and fairly alive with all kinds of gambling games. George Englebracht, living about five miles northwest of Buffalo, was relieved of \$100 on the 'shell game.' A young doctor, studying with Dr. Kellenberger of that city, lost \$75 which he had just taken from the Citizens' State bank for that express purpose, on the same game. Many other prominent citizens of that town also lost from \$10 to \$50 in a like manner. The killing of the showman was kept quiet until after the show had gone, and no arrests were made."

Maybe the lady rider was fatally injured or perhaps, as the Yates Center News stated, "her collar bone was broken."

Regardless of details, the Hummel show was a curse wherever it exhibited.

In 1898 John F. Hummel's Colossal Shows and the American Racing Association is known to have played the following towns: August 9, Valley Falls; August 12, Burlington; August 16, Girard; August 17, Cherryvale; August 19, Howard; August 22, Yates Center; August 27, Sterling.

The Kansas Democrat had good news for Hiawatha on September 8, 1898.

"BIG SHOW COMING.

"The big circus is coming. R. M. Harvey and Frank Purcell, press agent and local contractor for the Wallace circus, were here this week and arranged for the appearance of the big shows at Hiawatha on September 20.

"The Wallace shows, always good, are better this year than ever before, having been



enlarged and reorganized with many new and novel features.

"In speaking of the performance recently given at Charles City, Iowa, the *Daily X Rays* says: "The afternoon performance was presented before a tent full of people, who were wildly enthusiastic over every feature. There is an absence of sameness about the Wallace shows, every part of it being new, novel and artistic. Not a single thing on the bill was omitted, and when the magnificent exhibition ended the great throng filed out, loath to depart from a place which had provided them such a pleasant afternoon's entertainment."

Another handout in the *Democrat* stated that, "The acrobatic efforts of the Nelson family, the greatest in their line in the world, were simply marvelous; the Angelos are the equals of any flying artists in the business, and the grand ballet, led by the famous Mme. Maccari, was a new departure in a circus performance, and one that was greatly appreciated. There were innumerable acts by first-class artists, while a small army of really funny clowns kept the audience convulsed by their absurdities. The show scored a great success.—*Pittsburg Dispatch* of May 25th."

The Wallace advance crews missed nothing including telephone poles.

A two-column ad appeared in the *Democrat* on September 8 and again on the 15th bragging about "Three Rings, Half Mile Race Track, 1,000 Features, 100 Phenomenal Acts, 25 Clowns, 20 Hurrican Races, 4 Trains, 1,500 Employees, 6 Bands, 50 Cages, a Drove of Camels, 15 Open Dens, A Herd of Elephants, \$4,000 Daily Expenses," all of which might be expected from a show that boasted of "\$3,000,000 Capital."

A larger ad in the *Brown County World* claimed the show was, "HONORABLY CONDUCTED, HONESLY ADVERTISED

"Lofty in Conception, Regal in Equipment, Omnipotent in Strength. Ideal in Character, Splendid in Organization and Magnificent in Presentation. The Purest, Cleanest, Mightiest and Most Magnificent Amusement Institution of the 19th Century.

"NEVER DIVIDES, NEVER DIS-APPOINTS



A Great Wallace tableau in a parade in Kenosha, Wisconsin on June 2, 1898. Fred Dahlinger collection.

"Grand Spectacular Ballet, nineteen Coryphees, led by three Sisters Maccari, Premier Danseuses.

"THE GREATEST PERFORMERS

"In the known world are with the Great Wallace Shows this season, including, "The 9 Nelsons, \$10,000 Challenge Act

"The Angelos, Aerialists

"The 7 Stirks, Bicycle and Skating Experts

"The 10 Dellameads, Statuary Artists

"Mlle. Norda French, Mysterious Globe

10 Principal Male and Female Equestrians

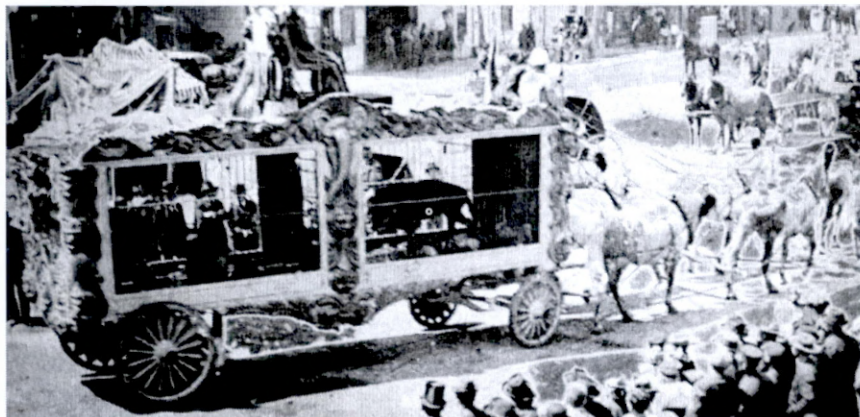
"The 3 Petits, Aerial Bar Extraordinary

"Leon and Singing Mule 'Trilby' Sisters Vortex, Triple Revolving Trapeze.

"OUR STREET PARADE At 10 a. m. Daily

"Is the finest ever put on the

A Great Wallace cage in a parade in Kenosha, Wisconsin on June 2, 1898. Fred Dahlinger collection.



streets. A Sunburst of Splendor. A Triumph of Art, Money and Good Taste, with Lavish Luxury of Spectacullar Effect, with Greatest Professional Features Conceivable.

"NO GAMBLING DEVICES TOLERATED."

The *World* reported on September 23, "The Wallace circus performance Tuesday was very good, beginning with a first-class street parade. The tents were pitched in the Adam Schilling lot opposite the round house. In the side show tent there were a number of gambling games and every one who tried to beat them lost his money, of course. The shell games cost investors several hundred dollars. No one can locate the little pea, because when a bet is made the shell man runs the pea into the palm of his hand, or sticks it to his thumb with sticky stuff he has with him. We trust this plain now to all speculators. The little pea is never under the shell, unless the gambler purposely places it there. This information has cost us considerable money. We understand that several of our wise men tried to convince the shell man that he had placed the little pea in under the

shell they pointed out to him—and they backed their conviction with money, which the shell man took with pleasure—only he wasn't perfectly convinced that he was mistaken as he ought to have been. The way he robbed some of our best citizens was sinful. He did not allow them to win once. His conduct was so very hog-gish that we doubt if those he swindled will ever trust any man again. Our people generally condemn his sharp practice as unbecoming in a Christian and a gentleman. He wasn't a bit nice. Where were the officers whose duty it is to arrest thieves?"

The Great Wallace Shows opened April 30 in Peru, Indiana, and closed in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on November 12. Only one date was played in Kansas in 1898, Hiawatha, September 20.

The Leavenworth *Evening Standard* printed a story on October 3, 1898, which had nothing to do with Kansas circus days, but described an act that was hard to follow.

"Norfolk, Virginia, October 3.—When Sparks's (sic) circus exhibited at Franklin, near here, the lion tamer added to the program by putting his head into the lion's mouth. The lion shut down, biting the trainer's head off. The lion's mate sprung on the body of the prostrate man and tore it to pieces."

Ahead of show day, Tuesday, October 4, 1898, the Clay Center *Dispatch* ran the following superb Ringling handout:

"TWICE ITS FORMER SIZE. The Ringling Brothers' Big Show More Than Doubled Since Last Year.

"The fact that Ringling Bros.' Worlds Greatest Shows, which exhibits in Clay Center on October 4, represents an actual investment of \$3,700,000, and that the daily expenses of this huge traveling exposition aggregate over \$7,400, constitute in themselves incontrovertible proofs that this is now beyond all comparison the grandest and most colossal amusement institution ever organized. For several years past, Ringling Bros.' great exhi-

bition has been recognized throughout the length and breadth of the land, not only as the largest and best arenic institution in America, but it has also won a signal triumph as a distinctively new departure in amusement enterprises. No enumeration of figures could give an adequate idea of the resources of the show. It is only by comparison with its own former greatness that its present stupendous magnitude can be appreciated; it is only when it is realized that Ringling Bros.' circus has twice as many cars, twice as many elephants, twice the number of huge pavilions, twice as many people, twice as many superb performers, twice as large a racing course, and seating capacity for twice as many people as it ever had before, that the magnitude of this wonderful enterprise can be even approximately understood. And then, such a circus, such a menagerie, such a bewildering display of rare and costly features. The five double trains used to transport the paraphernalia of the show represent a loading space of 130 ordinary cars; the 25 reason-gifted elephants, running the gamut from the tiniest of baby pachyderms to the hugest of elephantine mammoths, comprise the biggest herd of elephants ever before seen in captivity;

This monkeys on a carousel litho was used by Ringling Bros. in 1898. Library of Congress.

the three hundred arenic specialists embrace the very flower of the amusement world, the pick of the famous arenas of the world; the scores of dens of rare wild beasts represent fortunes, and even precious lives, expended in securing them in their native jungles; every carved and gold-illuminated cage, dazzling the eye with its glittering splendor, cost a ransom; every gorgeous triumphal car of the glorious new street carnival is a triumph of art and a tribute to the artist's inspiration; every one of the 400 beautiful horses is an equine delight. The performances are given in five arenas, in three rings, upon two big stages, on a quarter-mile hippodrome track, and in the vast dome of the largest tent ever constructed."

Another extensive handout appeared on the 22nd. "The superiority of Ringling Brothers' World's Greatest Shows over similar organizations in the United States and Europe is demonstrated in many ways, but none more effectively than in its zoological department. Many shows carry menageries, but it has remained for Ringling Brothers to organize a complete zoological garden, in which every beast of the jungle and every fowl of the air is displayed with proper classification and in a manner to permit of careful study and comparison. The arrangement of the mammoth menagerie



pavilion itself carries out the idea of a huge traveling 'Zoo.' In the center area are the led animals, including the most superb display of big and little elephants ever seen in this or any other country. This great triple herd of pachyderms embraces twenty-five magnificent specimens of the African and Asiatic elephant, all of which have been carefully trained to perform many marvelous feats in which the accuracy and memory of these animal performers are put to a successful test. On one side of the great ellipse is the aviary. This is a notable departure in zoological displays. It is not merely a conventional display of the most familiar tropical birds, but a complete exposition of ornithology, in which almost every bird, from the humming-bird and macaw to the huge stork and ostrich, is shown in its proper family group. The bright plumage of the tropical birds elicits endless expressions of admiration, while the entire pavilion is filled with the melody of these feathered songsters. Probably no exhibition ever given in America has ever proved a greater attraction to the ladies and children among the patrons of the great show. The aquarium, which is also a new and novel feature, is notable for its remarkable collection of hippopotami, sea lions, seals, Polar bears and other water-frequenting animals, and the huge tanks in which they are displayed are arranged in such a way, and with such characteristic environments, that it is easy to realize the conditions under which these strange animals exist in their native state. The children's menagerie has been augmented this year by a huge monkey den, fitted up as a playground, with a carrousel in the center, upon which the simians ride and gambol with delight to themselves and unlimited amusement to those who witness their almost human antics. Interest in the coming of this famous show to Clay Center, Tuesday, October 4, is universal, and no small part of this interest has been aroused by the encomiums that have been fairly showered upon its unique zoological display."

The final press department triumph was published September 29.

"A thirty-section free street parade! This is the startling novelty which Ringling Brothers, the noted circus managers, offer the public this year as the latest evidence of their originality and munificent expenditure. The idea of dividing a circus procession into divisions is in itself a novelty, and the leading newspapers everywhere declare that Ringling Bros.' street parade is the most novel, the most unique, the most gorgeous and the most royally resplendent street display ever inaugurated by a circus management. And even this does not tell the full story of its wonders. Each section represents some distinct national characteris-

This LaPearl ad appeared in the Ft. Scott *Lantern* on September 30, 1898. Kansas State Historical Society.

Fort Scott, Friday, October 7th
J. H. LAPEARL'S
GREAT ALLIED SHOWS,
 TWO RING CIRCUS.
 Gigantic Museum, Golden Menagerie & Spectacular Roman Hippodrome.



ON A SCALE OF MAGNITUDE NEVER BEFORE CONCEIVED, THIRTY, RIGGED, BETTER, GREATER, GRANDER THAN EVER BEFORE.
 A Magnificent Display of Entirely New Features.
 Grand, Gigantic, Moral, ... The Great ...
 ... MUSEUM OF MARVELS ... NEW GOLDEN MENAGERIE
 ... Mammoth ... International ...
 ... TWO RING CIRCUS ... MUSICAL & COMEDY ENTERTAINMENT ...

MANY STRANGE ZOOLOGICAL SPECIMENS, INCLUDING THE RAREST ANIMALS IN CAPTIVITY.
QUEEN, THE LIONESS, AND HER FAMILY OF YOUNG COBS!
 \$25,000 } The Largest Hippopotamus in Captivity
 FEATURE } Living ... Weighing 8000 pounds
 A Mother Blood-Sweating Behemoth of Holy WHITY.
 Captured in the densest, most remote regions of the mysterious River Nile.
CHARLIE, The Largest Elephant in America. | **DING-DONG, The Smallest Elephant in the World.**
 A ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN BROUGHT TO YOUR CITY ON WHEELS.
 TWO-FULL AND COMPLETE CIRCUS COMPANIES—TWO
 Embracing One Hundred Male and Female Equestrians, Acrobats, Athletes, Dancers, and Champions from all countries, presenting new and original feats and stunts, and the most original and spectacular performance of the world.
THE CHAMPION MALE AND FEMALE BARRECK RIDERS OF THE WORLD.
 Mr. Wm. J. Sullivan, Mr. Albert Johnson, Mr. Harry Higgins, Master Harry LaPearl, Miss Linda Jess, Miss Winona Willard, Miss Lillian Quinn, Miss Dottie Zeller.
 The Human Meteors, the LAPEARL FAMILY of Sensational Aerialists.
HAGIHARA'S JAPANESE TROUPE | **MONS. CARLOSA**
 Great Perpendicular Ladder Artist.
15 CLOWNS. All Jolly Bunch of Monks, presenting their Comicalities and Hilarious Situations in the most hilarious manner, creating hours of laughter.
 LAPEARL'S Marine Band, The Finest Musical Organization traveling with any Circus in America.
 An Amusement Enterprise requiring years of prodigious training, never keeping pace with the times, that demands the highest intelligence and experience, gained only by constant study, and CRISIS BARRETT WATERBURY YANIS.
 Grand, Free Street Parade! Be on the street at 10 o'clock a. m. and witness our Grand Parade, our parade, consisting of Clowns, Bands of Wild Animals, Beautiful Horses, Girders, and the most death-defying, Grand Free Exhibition ever witnessed. Captain James Miller, the famous driver, who will make a leading glide from a lower 100 feet through mid air.
GRAND GALA DAY, Remember the Day and Date.
 NO GAMBLING OR SMOKING ALLOWED. Prepare For the Coming Event.
 2 Performances Daily. Doors Open at 1 and 7 P. M.
 Will Positively Exhibit at FORT SCOTT, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7th.

tics, either in this or other countries, or some noted historic era, while the costuming, the tableaux, ornamentation and vari-colors of the huge dens and cars of state are so arranged as to blend in harmony or to create striking and effective contrasts to the artistic eye. Among the notable features in the thirty sections into which the parade is divided, are characteristic representations of all the most noted military organizations in the world, in their national uniform, properly accoutered and mounted on magnificent war horses; a military convoy in the Punjab (sic), with its ponderous elephants, drawing great, lumbering cannon and East India sharpshooters in their oscillating howdahs, together with guides, native soldiers and all the impediments of an Indo-British army on the march; a blood-quicken-ing reproduction of the Derby-day meet, with huge tally-hos, slender spiders, pretty T-carts, blooded racing stock, London's society leaders, jockeys, touts and other characteristic features of English racing life; a brilliant picture of Roman and Grecian splendor, as pictured in the great spectacles of Rome and Athens, together with Olympian games and charioteering of the historic days of Augustus; a caravan crossing the desert; a complete children's parade, with pony chariots, tiny tableaux, miniature cages and other novel effects delightful to the childish sense; 10 bands of music, over a hundred dens, cages and tableaux cars, and many other unique representations, each presented complete in its individual section, and comprising in their entirety the most bewilderingly beautiful and effective street display ever conceived or successfully organized. It is this wonderful new and novel procession that will inaugurate circus day in Clay Center next Tuesday, October 4, and those who fail to see it will miss the greatest event, outside of the performance itself, that has been presented to the public during the present century. Reserved numbered seats and admissions show day without any advance in price at Gowenlock's drug store."

The three handouts quoted above are among the finest ever created by a circus press corps.

Ringling Brothers' World's Greatest Shows in 1898 played only four dates in Kansas: October 3, Mankato; October 4, Clay Center; October 5, Herrington; October 6, Caldwell.

“Lo! A gorgeous sight adorns the billboards,” the Ft. Scott *Lantern* proclaimed on September 30, 1898. “Prancing horses, gilded chariots, and ‘animals such as never was,’ and a crowd of small boys, gazing admiringly. All of which betokens a big crowd here on circus day and money enough carried off to pay half a dozen mortgages. But what matter? Circus folks must live as well as we, and ‘what odds where the money goes as long as we’re happy.’”

Also, on September 30, the *Lantern* carried the following handout: "The entire dome of J. H. LaPEARL'S Colossal Circus and Hippodrome tent is crazy net work of aerial apparatus for the presentation of a myriad of sensational and thrilling aerial displays by the most daring and fearless high air performers of both Europe and America. So great is the number of aerial acts presented that as many as eight different specialties of this character are given at the same time; the immense dome of the amphitheater being literally alive with the most daring and skillful exhibits. Prominent among the many high

J. H. LaPearl herald used in 1898.
Pfening Archives.

The *Lantern* made no mention of the show after the exhibitions.

Girard saw LaPearl's masterpiece on October 8. A two-column ad ran in the *Press* on September 29 and again October 6, identical with the Ft. Scott ad except that a cut of a four-pole big top was replaced with an illustration of a huge-mouthed hippo which could "Be Seen Only with J. H. LaPearl's Great Railroad Shows, Royal Menagerie & Mammoth Museum."

A handout told the facts concerning the magnificent beast, "The Feature of all Features, a \$25,000.00 feature of this department [Menagerie]. Namely: The largest living hippopotamus in captivity. A monster blood sweating behemoth of Holy Writ. Captured in the dense morass of the wildest regions of the mysterious River Nile, weighing 6000 pounds, by odds many times larger than any other in captivity. An enormous beast vieing with the elephant for supremacy in size and presenting a picture of animal life as it existed in prehistoric times. This huge beast splashes about in its watery bed, ever and anon opening its giant mouth and displaying a huge cavern, ominous as the jaws of death were you not protected from it by strong iron bars. Mr. LaPearl makes this standing offer to the public, viz: to refund to anyone the price of admission if this monster is not to be seen on exhibition as advertised at Girard. Saturdav. October 8th."

A later handout named some of the performers. "Realizing that equestrianism is one of the most important features of a perfect circus, J. H. LaPearl has brought together the greatest gathering of male and female riders ever appearing with one show. This company of arenic stars includes the leading equestrians of all countries and the acknowledged champion bareback riders of the world, namely, Wm. F. Melrose, Albert Johnson, Master Harry

BANDWAGON JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1999 PAGE 46

1999 CHS CONVENTION-OUR 60th ANNIVERSARY!

The annual CHS convention will be held at Los Angeles, California on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, May 20, 21, and 22, 1999.

Fill out the enclosed registration card and mail it to Treasurer Dave Price with the registration fee - - **\$98 per person or \$138 per person** if you want the extra added attraction, a dinner and show at the fabulous Magic Castle. The registration deadline is April 19th.

Highlight of the convention will be a visit to Ringling Bros' brand new tent show, **BARNUM'S KALEIDOSCAPE** in Century City. We will attend the 3:30 matinee performance on Thursday, May 20th with bus transportation provided.

Papers and exhibitions will include Bill Slout on "Strange Bedfellows," Barnum's unlikely partnership with "Pogey" O'Brien; Don Carson with rare couriers and heralds; John McConnell's "A Ring, A Horse, and A Clown," the award winning film about the Hanneford family; Stuart Thayer's eagerly anticipated "Sinking in St. Paul;" and much more. A banquet is planned for Saturday evening, May 22. Guest speaker will be Scott Smith, Vice President of New Business for Feld Entertainment and chief framer of the new tent show.

We will have our always-exciting auction of circus material and memorabilia. Bring your material to the convention or ship it in advance to William L. Slout, 2995 Ladera Road, San Bernardino, CA, 92405 (TEL: 909-882-8938).

The Magic Castle is one of Hollywood's outstanding attractions. Located in an old Victorian mansion it offers five theaters of continuously operating magic and illusion, plus an outstanding restaurant. We offer this evening attraction for an additional \$40 which includes dinner and entertainment. It is a dressy affair for women. Coats and ties are required for men.

Convention headquarters will be the **QUALITY HOTEL - LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**, 5249 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90045. Make your room reservation by calling (310) 645-2200 [FAX 310-641-8214] or 1-800-266-2200. Refer to rate code CHS-1 to obtain the special reduced rate of \$71.95 per night, single or double (with taxes \$82.02). For a 3rd and 4th person per room (4 max.) there is an additional charge of \$5.00 each (with taxes \$5.70 each.) Rollaways are \$15.00. Rooms at these rates are limited and the deadline for reserving them is May 4.

The hotel is only five minutes from the airport and there is free 24-hour shuttle service. The hotel offers covered, secure parking to registered CHS'ers at \$5.00 per day per car including tax.

Attendees may register on Wednesday afternoon, May 19 and on Thursday morning, May 20. The formal program begins at 10:00 a.m. May 20 and concludes Saturday evening, May 22.

SEE YOU IN LOS ANGELES IN MAY
CELEBRATE OUR 60TH ANNIVERSARY

**Use the registration form on the other page.
Tear the pages apart and keep the above information
for future reference.**

REGISTRATION
1999 CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, MAY 20, 21, and 22.

Name(s)_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____ Telephone_____

Registration per person, payable in advance in US dollars:

Required for all events and activities (except Magic Castle) — \$98.00

Magic Castle (optional) _____ -----\$40.00

Total (with Magic Castle) _____ ----- \$138.00

Sorry, "a la carte" registration is not possible beyond these two options.

Enclose your check for \$98_____ or \$138_____ per person payable to CIRCUS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. and mail it with this registration form to:

Dave Price, CHS Treasurer
1954 Old Hickory Blvd.
Nashville, TN. 37027-4014

If you have any questions, please call Richard Reynolds, 404-252-5449. Messages may be left on the recording machine. Or, E-Mail RJR3RD@aol.com

Registration closes on April 19, 1999. Confirmation notices will not be sent.

Please make your own lodging reservations directly with **Quality Hotel - LAX** (310) 645-2200 [FAX 310-641-8214] or 1-800-266-2200. Mention that your group is the Circus Historical Society (Rate Code CHS-1) for the special reduced rate of \$71.95 for a single or double (with taxes \$82.02). For a 3rd and 4th person per room (4 maximum) there is an additional charge of \$5.00 each (with taxes, \$5.70 ea.). Rollaways are \$15.00. CHS's room block at these rates will remain available only until May 4.

Quality Hotel - LAX is only 5 minutes from the Los Angeles International Airport and there is free 24-hour airport shuttle. The hotel offers covered, secure parking to registered CHS'ers at \$5.00 per day per car including tax.

LaPearl, Harry Higgins, Linda Jeal, Blanch Hillard, Dollie Julian, Lizzie Guice."

The *Press* had kind words for the show. "La Pearl's circus, which exhibited in Girard last Saturday, is one of the best on the road for the money."

"The show since its appearance here last season has been greatly enlarged, and is now a two-ringed circus of no small proportions. The performance was above the average, and clean in every respect. There were no grafters, short changers, etc., which follow so many circuses."

A one-column ad in the *Weekly Sun* which heralded the exhibits of Monday, October 10, was the only recognition La Pearl received in Parsons. A short list of attractions mentioned, "Queen The Lioness and her Family of Young Cubs."

"\$25,000 Feature—The Largest Hippopotamus Living in Captivity, Weighing 6,000 lbs."

"Charlie the Largest Elephant in America."

"Ding-Dong The Smallest Elephant in the world."

"Two Full and Complete Circus Companies!"

"Hagihar's Japanese Troupe."

"LaPearl's Marine Band! The Finest Musical Organization traveling with any Circus in America."

"Advertising Car No. 1 of La Pearl's circus was in town Monday [October 3] and brightened up the dead walls with gay and gaudy posters," according to the *Pittsburg Kansan*. Circus day was Saturday, October 15.

The usual hippo ad appeared on October 6 and 13.

LaPearl's modesty was proven in a handout published on the 13th. "In presenting to my millions of American patrons this, my eighth annual announcement, I take the liberty of defining my position in the amusement world. My great Allied Shows that will exhibit at Pittsburg Saturday, Oct., 15 and now recognized and declared to be one of America's leading amusement institutions, I offer no apology in making



This unusual bandwagon was built for the LaPearl show in 1897. Pfening Archives.

this statement. The resources at my command and the basis on which my enormous enterprise is organized for the season of 1898, fully justifies this declaration—While my amusement enterprise has been prodigiously enlarged in each and every department by the addition of numberless features.

"I have also added a large collection of wild animals, embracing elephants, camels, lions, jaguars, hyenas, civets, ocellots, tigers and many rare, unique and heretofore unseen wild animals, and the largest living Hippopotamus (sic) on exhibition in the world."

"This mammoth collection of zoological attractions constitute my Golden Menagerie, and is the largest to be seen with any traveling organization exhibiting in America at popular prices."

"I feel under no necessity of laying stress on this fact. Everyone knows that my show has grown, for in the seven years of my amusement enterprise, each year has seen its unexampled growth and increase in size over the preceding one; and I take pride in announcing that the season of 1898 has been no exception to the rule. In fact, the additions and enlargements for this year have been so prodigious as to be a source of a great surprise even to my most sanguine friends and patrons."

"In beginning my eighth year in amusement history I have no misgivings as to the outcome. I am confident that the present year of unparalleled effort and success in amuse-

ment presentation will meet with the full measure of appreciation my patrons have always accorded me and for which I beg to tender my warmest gratitude. Respectfully your amusement servant, J. H. LaPEARL."

Circus day in Pittsburg was a disappointment, as reported by the *Kansan*. "La

Pearle's (sic) great circus has come and gone. Saturday was not an auspicious day for circuses as the wind started to work early in the morning and never took a rest until evening. The tents—part of them were pitched on the old circus grounds on South Broadway. Three attempts were made to put up the big main tent but each time the strong wind prevented finally snapping one of the three big center poles square in two. So the afternoon show did not come off. While the roustabouts were wrestling with the big canvas the parade was made up and the public was given the free show without a break. The parade was good but not especially gorgeous. Owing to the state of the weather only a small crowd turned out in the evening and as a result Mr. La Pearle decided not to give any evening entertainment either. Mr. La Pearle stated to the *Kansan* representative that this was the second pole broken within a week and that they had suffered considerably from wind during the present season. He stated that his stopover in Pittsburg just cost about a thousand dollars. As Monday was a cold and sleety day their engagement in Lamar, Missouri, was not a brilliant success and it is more than likely that the circus will go into winter quarters in a few days."

J. H. La Pearl's Great Allied Shows and Two-Ring Circus, Museum and Golden Menagerie booked four dates in Kansas in 1898: October 7, Ft. Scott; October 8, Girard; October 10, Parsons; October 15, Pittsburg (Blown).

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video Inc., Topeka, Kansas.

TWICE DAILY RAIN OR SHINE DOORS OPEN AT 1 AND
7 P. M. PERFORMANCE BEGINS ONE HOUR LATER

AL. F. WHEELER'S NEW MODEL SHOWS

TWO-RING CIRCUS -
MAMMOTH MENAGERIE &
WORLD OF WONDERS

WAIT FOR IT
WATCH FOR IT



GRAND MASTADONIC FREE STREET PARADE AT 12 O'CLOCK DAILY